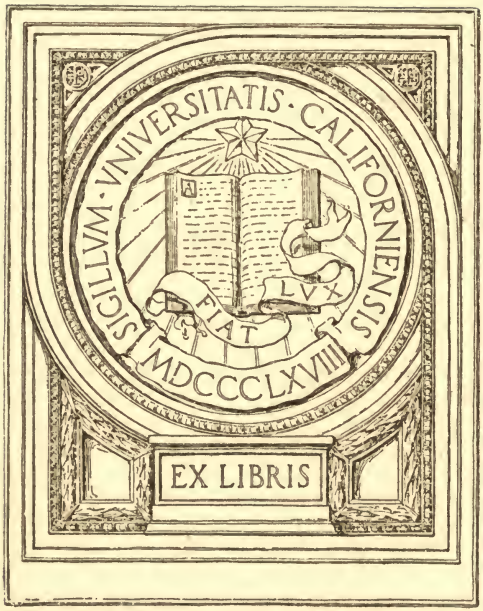
TOWARD THE GULF

EDGAR LEE MASTERS



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TOWARD THE GULF

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TOWARD THE GULF

BY

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

AUTHOR OF

"SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY," "SONGS AND SATIRES,"

"THE GREAT VALLEY"

New York

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TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

It would have been fitting had I dedicated Spoon River Anthology to you. Considerations of an intimate nature, not to mention a literary encouragement which was before yours, crowded you from the page. Yet you know that it was you who pressed upon my attention in June, 1909, the Greek Anthology. It was from contemplation of its epitaphs that my hand unconsciously strayed to the sketches of "Hod Putt," "Serepta The Scold" ("Serepta Mason" in the book), "Amanda Barker" ("Amanda" in the book), "Ollie McGee" and "The Unknown," the first written and the first printed sketches of The Spoon River Anthology. The *Mirror* of May 29th, 1914, is their record.

I take one of the epigrams of Meleager with its sad revealment and touch of irony and turn it from its prose form to a verse form, making verses according to the breath pauses:

"The holy night and thou, O Lamp, we took as witness of our vows; and before thee we swore, he that would love me always and I that I would never leave him. We swore, and thou wert witness of our double promise. But now he says that our vows were written on the running waters. And thou, O Lamp, thou seest him in the arms of another."

from the *Mirror* some of the poems. Though at this time the schematic effect of the Anthology could not be measured, Edward J. Wheeler, that devoted patron of the art and discriminating critic of its manifestations, was attracted, I venture to say, by the substance of "Griffy, The Cooper," for that is one of the poems from the Anthology which he set forth in his column "The Voice of Living Poets" in the issue referred to. *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse*, followed in its issue of October, 1914, with a reprinting from the *Mirror*. In a word, the Anthology went the rounds over the country before it was issued in book form. And a reception was thus prepared for the complete work not often falling to the lot of a literary production. I must not omit an expression of my gratitude for the very high praise which John Cowper Powys bestowed on the Anthology just before it appeared in book form and the publicity which was given his lecture by the *New York Times*. Nathan Haskell Dole printed an article in the Boston *Transcript* of June 30, 1915, in which he contrasted the work with the Greek Anthology, pointing in particular to certain epitaphs by Carphylides, Kallaischros and Pollianos. The critical testimony of Miss Harriet Monroe in her editorial comments and in her preface to "The New Poetry" has greatly strengthened the judgment of to-day against a reversal at the hands of a later criticism.

TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

This response to the Anthology while it was appearing in the *Mirror* and afterwards when put in the book was to nothing so much as to the substance. It was accepted as a picture of our life in America. It was interpreted as a transcript of the state of mind of men and women here and elsewhere. You called it a Comedy Humaine in your announcement of my identity as the author in the *Mirror* of November 20, 1914. If the epitaphic form gave added novelty I must confess that the idea was suggested to me by the Greek Anthology. But it was rather because of the Greek Anthology than from it that I evolved the less harmonious epitaphs with which Spoon River Anthology was commenced. As to metrical epitaphs it is needless to say that I drew upon the legitimate materials of authentic English versification. Up to the Spring of 1914, I had never allowed a Spring to pass without reading Homer; and I feel that this familiarity had its influence both as to form and spirit; but I shall not take the space now to pursue this line of confessional.

What is the substance of which I have spoken if it be not the life around us as we view it through eyes whose vision lies in heredity, mode of life, understanding of ourselves and of our place and time? You have lived much. As a critic and a student of the country no one understands America better than you do. As a denizen of the west, but as a surveyor of the east and west you have brought to the country's interpretation

a knowledge of its political and literary life as well as a proficiency in the history of other lands and other times. You have seen and watched the unfolding of forces that sprang up after the Civil War. Those forces mounted in the eighties and exploded in free silver in 1896. They began to hit through the directed marksmanship of Theodore Roosevelt during his second term. You knew at first hand all that went with these forces of human hope, futile or valiant endeavor, articulate or inarticulate expression of the new birth. You saw and lived, but in greater degree, what I have seen and lived. And with this back-ground you inspired and instructed me in my analysis. Standing by you confirmed or corrected my sculpturing of the clay taken out of the soil from which we both came. You did this with an eye familiar with the secrets of the last twenty years, familiar also with the relation of those years to the time which preceded and bore them.

So it is, that not only because I could not dedicate Spoon River to you, but for the larger reasons indicated, am I impelled to do you whatever honor there may be in taking your name for this book. By this outline confession, sometime perhaps to be filled in, do I make known what your relation is to these interpretations of mine resulting from a spirit, life, thought, environment which have similarly come to us and have similarly affected us.

TO WILLIAM MARION REEDY

I call this book "Toward the Gulf," a title importing a continuation of the attempts of Spoon River and The Great Valley to mirror the age and the country in which we live. It does not matter which one of these books carries your name and makes these acknowledgments; so far, anyway, as the opportunity is concerned for expressing my appreciation of your friendship and the great esteem and affectionate interest in which I hold you.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS.

TOWARD THE GULF

Dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt

From the Cordilleran Highlands,
From the Height of Land
Far north.
From the Lake of the Woods,
From Rainy Lake,
From Itasca's springs.
From the snow and the ice
Of the mountains,
Breathed on by the sun,
And given life,
Awakened by kisses of fire,
Moving, gliding as brightest hyaline
Down the cliffs,
Down the hills,
Over the stones.
Trickling as rills;
Swiftly running as mountain brooks;
Swirling through runnels of rock;
Curving in spheréd silence
Around the long worn walls of granite gorges;
Storming through chasms;
And flowing for miles in quiet over the Titan basin
To the muddled waters of the mighty river,

Himself obeying the call of the gulf,
And the unfathomed urge of the sea!

* * * * *

Waters of mountain peaks,
Spirits of liberty
Leaving your pure retreats
For work in the world.
Soiling your crystal springs
With the waste that is whirled to your breast as you run,
Until you are foul as the crawling leviathan
That devours you,
And uses you to carry waste and earth
For the making of land at the gulf,
For the conquest of land for the feet of men.

* * * * *

De Soto, Marquette and La Salle
Planting your cross in vain,
Gaining neither gold nor ivory,
Nor tribute
For France or Spain.
Making land alone
For liberty!
You could proclaim in the name of the cross
The dominion of kings over a world that was new.
But the river has altered its course:

TOWARD THE GULF

There are fertile fields
For a thousand miles where the river flowed that you
knew.
And there are liberty and democracy
For thousands of miles
Where in the name of kings, and for the cross
You tramped the tangles for treasure.

* * * * *

The Falls of St. Anthony tumble the waters
In laughter and tumult and roaring of voices,
Swirling, dancing, leaping, foaming,
Spirits of caverns, of canyons and gorges:
Waters tinctured by star-lights, sweetened by breezes
Blown over snows, out of the rosy northlands,
Through forests of pine and hemlock,
Whisperings of the Pacific grown symphonic.
Voices of freedom, restless, unconquered,
Mad with divinity, fearless and free:—
Hunters and choppers, warriors, revelers,
Laughers, dancers, fiddlers, freemen,
Climbing the crests of the Alleghenies,
Singing, chopping, hunting, fighting
Erupting into Kentucky and Tennessee,
Into Ohio, Indiana, Illinois,
Sweeping away the waste of the Indians,
As the river carries mud for the making of land.
And taking the land of Illinois from kings

And handing its allegiance to the Republic.
What riflemen with Daniel Boone for leader,
And conquerors with Clark for captain
Plunge down like melted snows
The rocks and chasms of forbidden mountains,
And make more land for freemen!
Clear-eyed, hard-muscled, dauntless hunters,
Choppers of forests and tillers of fields
Meet at last in a field of snow-white clover
To make wise laws for states,
And to teach their sons of the new West
That suffrage is the right of freemen.
Until the lion of Tennessee,
Who crushes king-craft near the gulf,
Where La Salle proclaimed the crown,
And the cross,
Is made the ruler of the republic
By freeman suffragans,
And winners of the West!

* * * * *

Father of Waters! Ever recurring symbol of wider freedom,
Even to the ocean girdled earth,
The out-worn rule of Florida rots your domain.
But the lion of Tennessee asks: Would you take from Spain
The land she has lost but in name?

It shall be done in a month if you loose my sword.
It was done as he said.
And the sick and drunken power of Spain that clung,
And sucked at the life of Chile, Peru, Argentina,
Loosened under the blows of San Martin and Bolivar,
Breathing the lightning thrown by Napoleon the Great
On the thrones of Europe.
Father of Waters! 'twas you who made us say:
No kings this side of the earth forever!
One-half of the earth shall be free
By our word and the might that is back of our word!

* * * * *

The falls of St. Anthony tumble the waters
In laughter and tumult and roaring of voices!
And the river moves in its winding channel toward the gulf,
Over the breast of De Soto,
By the swamp grave of La Salle!
The old days sleep, the lion of Tennessee sleeps
With Daniel Boone and the hunters,
The rifle men, the revelers,
The laughers and dancers and choppers
Who climbed the crests of the Alleghenies,
And poured themselves into Tennessee, Ohio,
Kentucky, Illinois, the bountiful West.
But the river never sleeps, the river flows forever,
Making land forever, reclaiming the wastes of the sea.

And the race never sleeps, the race moves on forever.
And wars must come, as the waters must sweep away
Drift-wood, dead wood, choking the strength of the river—
For Liberty never sleeps!

* * * * *

The lion of Tennessee sleeps!
And over the graves of the hunters and choppers
The tramp of troops is heard!
There is war again,
O, Father of Waters!
There is war, O, symbol of freedom!
They have chained your giant strength for the cause
Of trade in men.
But a man of the West, a denizen of your shore,
Wholly American,
Compact, clear-eyed, nerved like a hunter,
Who knew no faster beat of the heart,
Except in charity, forgiveness, peace;
Generous, plain, democratic,
Scarcely appraising himself at full,
A spiritual rifleman and chopper,
Of the breed of Daniel Boone—
This man, your child, O, Father of Waters,
Waked from the winter sleep of a useless day
By the rising sun of a Freedom bright and strong,
Slipped like the loosened snows of your mountain streams

Into a channel of fate as sure as your own—
A fate which said: till the thing be done
Turn not back nor stop.
Ulysses of the great Atlantis,
Wholly American,
Patient, silent, tireless, watchful, undismayed
Grant at Fort Donelson, Grant at Vicksburg,
Leading the sons of choppers and riflemen,
Pushing on as the hunters and farmers
Poured from the mountains into the West,
Freed you, Father of Waters,
To flow to the Gulf and be one
With the earth-engirdled tides of time.
And gave us states made ready for the hands
Wholly American:
Hunters, choppers, tillers, fighters
For epochs vast and new
In Truth, in Liberty,
Posters from land to land and sea to sea
Till all the earth be free!

* * * * *

Ulysses of the great Atlantis,
Dream not of disaster,
Sleep the sleep of the brave
In your couch afar from the Father of Waters!
A new Ulysses arises,
Who turns not back, nor stops

Till the thing is done.
He cuts with one stroke of the sword
The stubborn neck that keeps the Gulf
And the Caribbean
From the luring Pacific.
Roosevelt the hunter, the pioneer,
Wholly American,
Winner of greater wests
Till all the earth be free!

* * * * *

And forever as long as the river flows toward the Gulf
Ulysses reincarnate shall come
To guard our places of sleep,
Till East and West shall be one in the west of heaven and earth!

* * * * *

THE LAKE BOATS

In an old print
I see a thicket of masts on the river.
But in the prints to be
There will be lake boats,
With port holes, funnels, rows of decks,
Huddled like swans by the docks,
Under the shadows of cliffs of brick.
And who will know from the prints to be,
When the Albatross and the Golden Eagle,
The flying craft which shall carry the vision
Of impatient lovers wounded by Spring
To the shaded rivers of Michigan,
That it was the Missouri, the Iowa,
And the City of Benton Harbor
Which lay huddled like swans by the docks?

You are not Lake Leman,
Walled in by Mt. Blanc.
One sees the whole world round you,
And beyond you, Lake Michigan.
And when the melodious winds of March
Wrinkle you and drive on the shore
The serpent rifts of sand and snow,
And sway the giant limbs of oaks,
Longing to bud,

The boats put forth for the ports that began to stir,
With the creak of reels unwinding the nets,
And the ring of the caulking wedge.
But in the June days—
The Alabama ploughs through liquid tons
Of sapphire waves.
She sinks from hills to valleys of water,
And rises again,
Like a swimming gull!
I wish a hundred years to come, and forever
All lovers could know the rapture
Of the lake boats sailing the first Spring days
To coverts of hepatica,
With the whole world sphering round you,
And the whole of the sky beyond you.

I knew the captain of the City of Grand Rapids.
He had sailed the seas as a boy.
And he stood on deck against the railing
Puffing a cigar,
Showing in his eyes the cinema flash of the sun on the waves.
It was June and life was easy. . . .
One could lie on deck and sleep,
Or sit in the sun and dream.
People were walking the decks and talking,
Children were singing.
And down on the purser's deck

A man was dancing by himself,
Whirling around like a dervish.
And this captain said to me:
"No life is better than this.
I could live forever,
And do nothing but run this boat
From the dock at Chicago to the dock at Holland
And back again."

One time I went to Grand Haven
On the Alabama with Charley Shippey.
It was dawn, but white dawn only,
Under the reign of Leucothea,
As we volplaned, so it seemed, from the lake
Past the lighthouse into the river.
And afterward laughing and talking
Hurried to Van Dreezer's restaurant
For breakfast.
(Charley knew him and talked of things
Unknown to me as he cooked the breakfast.)
Then we fished the mile's length of the pier
In a gale full of warmth and moisture
Which blew the gulls about like confetti,
And flapped like a flag the linen duster
Of a fisherman who paced the pier—
(Charley called him Rip Van Winkle).
The only thing that could be better
Than this day on the pier

Would be its counterpart in heaven,
As Swedenborg would say—
Charley is fishing somewhere now, I think.

There is a grove of oaks on a bluff by the river
At Berrien Springs.
There is a cottage that eyes the lake
Between pines and silver birches
At South Haven.
There is the inviolable wonder of wooded shore
Curving for miles at Saugatuck.
And at Holland a beach like Scheveningen's.
And at Charlevoix the sudden quaintness
Of an old-world place by the sea.
There are the hills around Elk Lake
Where the blue of the sky is so still and clear
It seems it was rubbed above them
By the swipe of a giant thumb.
And beyond these the little Traverse Bay
Where the roar of the breeze goes round
Like a roulette ball in the groove of the wheel,
Circling the bay,
And beyond these Mackinac and the Cheneaux
Islands—
And beyond these a great mystery!—

Neither ice floes, nor winter's palsy
Stays the tide in the river.

THE LAKE BOATS

And under the shadows of cliffs of brick
The lake boats
Huddled like swans
Turn and sigh like sleepers—
They are longing for the Spring!

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Where are the cabalists, the insidious committees,
The panders who betray the idiot cities
For miles and miles toward the prairie sprawled,
Ignorant, soul-less, rich,
Smothered in fumes of pitch?

* * * * *

Rooms of mahogany in tall sky scrapers
See the unfolding and the folding up
Of ring-clipped papers,
And letters which keep drugged the public cup.
The walls hear whispers and the semi-tones
Of voices in the corner, over telephones
Muffled by Persian padding, gemmed with brass spittoons.
Butts of cigars are on the glass topped table,
And through the smoke, gracing the furtive Babel,
The bishop's picture blesses the picaroons,
Who start or stop the life of millions moving
Unconscious of obedience, the plastic
Yielders to satanic and dynastic
Hands of reproaching and approving.

* * * * *

Here come knights armed,
But with their arms concealed,
And rubber heeled.
Here priests and wavering want are charmed.
And shadows fall here like the shark's
In messages received or sent.
Signals are flying from the battlement.
And every president
Of rail, gas, coal and oil, the parks,
The receipt of custom knows, without a look,
Their meaning as the code is in no book.
The treasonous cracksmen of the city's wealth
Watch for the flags of stealth!

* * * * *

Acres of coal lie fenced along the tracks.
Tracks ribbon the streets, and beneath the streets
Wires for voices, fire, thwart the plebiscites,
And choke the counsels and symposiacs
Of dreamers who have pity for the backs
That bear and bleed.
All things are theirs: tracks, wires, streets and coal,
The church's creed,
The city's soul,
The city's sea girt loveliness,
The merciless and meretricious press.

* * * * *

Far up in a watch-tower, where the news is printed,
Gray faces and bright eyes, weary and cynical
Discuss fresh wonders of the old cabal.
But nothing of its work in type is hinted:
Taxes are high! The mentors of the town
Must keep their taxes down
On buildings, presses, stocks
In gas, oil, coal and docks.
The mahogany rooms conceal a spider man
Who holds the taxing bodies through the church,
And knights with arms concealed. The mentors search
The spider man, the master publican,
And for his friendship silence keep,
Letting him herd the populace like sheep
For self and for the insatiable desires
Of coal and tracks and wires,
Pick judges, legislators,
And tax-gatherers.
Or name his favorites, whom they name:
The slick and sinistral,
Servitors of the cabal,
For praise which seems the equivalent of fame:
Giving to the delicate handed crackers
Of priceless safes, the spiritual slackers,
The flash and thunder of front pages!
And the gulled millions stare and fling their wages
Where they are bidden, helpless and emasculate.
And the unilluminate,

Whose brows are brass,
Who weep on every Sabbath day
For Jesus riding on an ass,
Scarce know the ass is they,
Now ridden by his effigy,
The publican with Jesus' painted mask,
Along a way where fumes of odorless gas
First spur then fell them from the task.

* * * * *

Through the parade runs swift the psychic cackle
Like thorns beneath a boiling pot that crackle.
And the angels say to Yahveh looking down
From the alabaster railing, on the town,
O, cackle, cackle, cackle, crack and crack
We wish we had our little Sodom back!

* * * * *

EXCLUDED MIDDLE

Out of the mercury shimmer of glass
Over these daguerreotypes
The balloon-like spread of a skirt of silk emerges
With its little figure of flowers.
And the enameled glair of parted hair
Lies over the oval brow,
From under which eyes of fiery blackness
Look through you.
And the only repose of spirit shown
Is in the hands
Lying loosely one in the other,
Lightly clasped somewhat below the breast. . . .
And in the companion folder of this case
Of gutta percha
Is the shape of a man.
His brow is oval too, but broader.
His nose is long, but thick at the tip.
His eyes are blue
Wherein faith burns her signal lights,
And flashes her convictions.
His mouth is tense, almost a slit.
And his face is a massive Calvinism
Resting on a stock tie.

EXCLUDED MIDDLE

They were married, you see.
The clasp on this gutta percha case
Locks them together.
They were locked together in life.
And a hasp of brass
Keeps their shadows face to face in the case
Which has been handed down—
(The pictures of noble ancestors,
Showing what strains of gentle blood
Flow in the third generation)—
From Massachusetts to Illinois. . . .

Long ago it was over for them,
Massachusetts has done its part,
She raised the seed
And a wind blew it over to Illinois
Where it has mixed, multiplied, mutated
Until one soul comes forth:
But a soul all striped and streaked,
And a soul self-crossed and self-opposed,
As it were a tree which on one branch
Bears northern spies,
And on another thorn apples. . . .

Come Weissmann, Von Baer and Schleiden,
And you Buffon and De Vries,
Come with your secrets of sea shore asters
Night-shade, henbanes, gloxinias,

Veronicas, snap-dragons, Danebrog,
And show us how they cross and change,
And become hybrids.
And show us what heredity is,
And how it works.
For the secret of these human beings
Locked in this gutta percha case
Is the secret of Mephistos and red Campions.

Let us lay out the facts as far as we can.
Her eyes were black,
His eyes were blue.
She saw through shadows, walls and doors,
She knew life and hungered for more.
But he lived in the mists, and climbed to high places
To feel clouds about his face, and get the lights
Of supernal sun-sets.
She was reason, and he was faith.
She had an illumination, but of the intellect.
And he had an illumination but of the soul.
And she saw God as merciless law,
And he knew God as divine love.
And she was a man, and he in part was a woman.
He stood in a pulpit and preached the Christ,
And the remission of sins by blood,
And the literal fall of man through Adam,
And the mystical and actual salvation of man
Through the coming of Christ.

And she sat in a pew shading her great eyes
To hide her scorn for it all.
She was crucified,
And raged to the last like the impenitent thief
Against the fate which wasted and trampled down
Her wisdom, sagacity, versatile skill,
Which would have piled up gold or honors
For a mate who knew that life is growth,
And health, and the satisfaction of wants,
And place and reputation and mansion houses,
And mahogany and silver,
And beautiful living.
She hated him, and hence she pitied him.
She was like the gardener with great pruners
Deciding to clip, sometimes not clipping
Just for the dread.
She had married him—but why?
Some inscrutable air
Wafted his pollen to her across a wide garden—
Some power had crossed them.
And here is the secret I think:
(As we would say here is electricity)
It is the vibration inhering in sex
That produces devils or angels,
And it is the sex reaction in men and women
That brings forth devils or angels,
And starts in them the germs of powers or passions,
Becoming loves, ferocities, gifts and weaknesses,

Till the stock dies out.
So now for their hybrid children:—
She gave birth to four daughters and one son.

But first what have we for the composition of these daughters?
Reason opposed and becoming keener therefor.
Faith mocked and drawing its mantel closer.
Love thwarted and becoming acid.
Hatred mounting too high and thinning into pity.
Hunger for life unappeased and becoming a stream under-ground
Where only blind things swim.
God year by year removing himself to remoter thrones
Of inexorable law.
God coming closer even while disease
And total blindness came between him and God
And defeated the mercy of God.
And a love and a trust growing deeper in him
As she in great thirst, hanging on the cross,
Mocked his crucifixion,
And talked philosophy between the spasms of pain,
Till at last she is all satirist,
And he is all saint.

And all the children were raised
After the strictest fashion in New England,
And made to join the church,

And attend its services.
And these were the children:

Janet was a religious fanatic and a virago,
She debated religion with her husband for ten years,
Then he refused to talk, and for twenty years
Scarcely spoke to her.
She died a convert to Catholicism.
They had two children:
The boy became a forgerer
Of notorious skill.
The daughter married, but was barren.

Miranda married a rich man
And spent his money so fast that he failed.
She lashed him with a scorpion tongue
And made him believe at last
With her incessant reasonings
That he was a fool, and so had failed.
In middle life he started over again,
But became tangled in a law-suit.
Because of these things he killed himself.

Louise was a nymphomaniac.
She was married twice.
Both husbands fled from her insatiable embraces.
At thirty-two she became a woman on a telephone list,

Subject to be called,
And for two years ran through a daily orgy of sex,
When blindness came on her, as it came on her father
before her,
And she became a Christian Scientist,
And led an exemplary life.

Deborah was a Puritan of Puritans,
Her list of unmentionable things
Tabooed all the secrets of creation,
Leaving politics, religion, and human faults,
And the mistakes most people make,
And the natural depravity of man,
And his freedom to redeem himself if he chooses,
As the only subjects of conversation.
As a twister of words and meanings,
And a skilled welder of fallacies,
And a swift emerger from ineluctable traps of logic,
And a wit with an adder's tongue,
And a laugher,
And an unafraid facer of enemies,
Oppositions, hatreds,
She never knew her equal.
She was at once very cruel, and very tender,
Very selfish and very generous
Very little and very magnanimous.
Scrupulous as to the truth, and utterly disregardless
of the truth.

Of the keenest intuitions, yet gullible,
Easily used at times, of erratic judgment,
Analytic but pursuing with incredible swiftness
The falsest trails to her own undoing—
All in all the strangest mixture of colors and scent
Derived from father and mother,
But mixed by whom, and how, and why?

Now for the son named Herman, rebel soul.
His brow was like a loaf of bread, his eyes
Turned from his father's blue to gray, his nose
Was like his mother's, skin was dark like hers.
His shapely body, hands and feet belonged
To some patrician face, not to Marat's.
And his was like Marat's, fanatical,
Materialistic, fierce, as it might guide
A reptile's crawl, but yet he crawled to peaks
Loving the hues of mists, but not the mists
His father loved. And being a rebel soul
He thought the world all wrong. A nothingness
Moving as malice marred the life of man.
'Twas man's great work to fight this Giant Fraud,
And all who praise and serve Him. 'Tis for man
To free the world from error, suffer, die
For liberty of thought. You see his mother
Is in possession of one part of him,
Or all of him for some time.

So he lives
Nursing the dream (like father he's a dreamer)
That genius fires him. All the while a gift
For analytics stored behind that brow,
That bulges like a loaf of bread, is all
Of which he well may boast above the man
He hates as but a slave of faith and fear.
He feeds luxurious doubt with Omar Khyam,
But for long years neglects the jug of wine.
And as for "thou" he does not wake for years,
Is a pure maiden when he weds, the grains
Run counter in him, end in knots at times.
He takes from father certain tastes and traits,
From mother certain others, one can see
His mother's sex re-actions to his father,
Not passed to him to make him celibate,
But holding back in sleeping passions which
Burst over bounds at last in lust, not love.
Not love since that great engine in the brow
Tears off the irised wings of love and bares
The poor worm's body where the wings had been:
What is it but desire? Such stuff in rhyme
In music over what is but desire,
And ends when that is satisfied!

He's a crank.
And follows all the psychic thrills which run
To cackles o'er the world. It's Looking Backward,

Or Robert Elsmere, Spencer's Social Statics,
It's socialism, Anarchism, Peace,
It's non-resistance with a swelling heart,
As who should say how truer to the faith
Of Jesus am I, without hope or faith,
Than churchmen. He's a prohibitionist,
The poor's protagonist, the knight at arms
Of fallen women, yelling at the rich
Whose wicked greed makes all the prostitutes—
No prostitutes without the wicked rich!
But as he ages, as the bitter days
Approach with perorations: O ye vipers,
The engine in him changes all the world,
Reverses all the wheels of thought behind.
For Nietzsche comes, and makes him superman.
He dumps the truth of Jesus over—there
It lies with his youth's textual skepticism,
And laughter at the supernatural.

Now what's the motivating principle
Of such a mind? In youth he sought for rules
Wherewith to trail and capture truths. He found it
In James McCosh's Logic, it was this:
Lex Exclusi Tertii aut Medii,
Law of Excluded Middle speaking plain:
A thing is true, or not true, never a third
Hypothesis, so God is or is not.
That's very good to start with, how to end,

And how to know which of the two is false—
He hunted out the false, as mother did—
Requires a tool. He found it in this book,
Reductio ad absurdum; let us see
Excluded middle use reductio.
God is or God is not, but then what God?
Excluded Middle never sought a God
To suffer demolition at his hands
Except the God of Illinois, the God
Grown but a little with his followers
Since Moses lived and Peter fished. So now
God is or God is not. Let us assume
God is and use reductio ad absurdum,
Taking away the rotten props, the posts
That do not fit or hold, and let Him fall.
For if he falls, the other postulate
That God is not is demonstrated. See
A universe of truth pass on the way
Cleared by Excluded Middle through the stuff
Of thought and visible things, a way that lets
A greater God escape, uncaught by all
The nippers of reductio ad absurdum.
But to resume his argument was this:
God is or God is not, but if God is
Why pestilence and war, earthquake and famine?
He either wills them, or cannot prevent them,
But if he wills them God is evil, if
He can't prevent them, he is limited.

But God, you say, is good, omnipotent,
And here I prove Him evil, or too weak
To stay the evil. Having shown your God
Lacking in what makes God, the proposition
Which I oppose to this, that God is not
Stands proven. For as evil is most clear
In sickness, pain and death, it cannot be
There is a Power with strength to overcome them,
Yet suffers them to be.

And so this man
Went through the years of life, and stripped the fields
Of beauty and of thought with mandibles
Insatiable as the locust's, which devours
A season's care and labor in an hour.
He stripped these fields and ate them, but they made
No meat or fat for him. And so he lived
On his own thought, as starving men may live
On stored up fat. And so in time he starved.
The thought in him no longer fed his life,
And he had withered up the outer world
Of man and nature, stripped it to the bone,
Nothing but skull and cross-bones greeted him
Wherever he turned—the world became a bottle
Filled with a bitter essence he could drink
From long accustomed doses—labeled poison
And marked with skull and cross-bones. Could he
laugh

As mother laughed? No more! He tried to find
The mother's laugh and secret for the laugh
Which kept her to the end—but did she laugh?
Or if she laughed, was it so hollow, forced
As all his laughter now was. He had proved
Too much for laughter. Nothing but himself
Remained to keep himself, he lived alone
Upon his stored up fat, now daily growing
To dangerous thinness.

So with love of woman.
He had found "thou" the jug of wine as well,
"Thou" "thou" had come and gone too many times.
For what is sex but touch of flesh, the hand
Is flesh and hands may touch, if so, the loins—
Reductio ad absurdum, O you fools,
Who see a wrong in touch of loins, no wrong
In clasp of hands. And so again, again
With his own tools of thought he bruised his hands
Until they grew too callous to perceive
When they were touched.

So by analysis
He turned on everything he once believed.
Let's make an end!

Men thought Excluded Middle
Was born for great things. Why that bulging brow
And analytic keen if not for greatness?

EXCUDLED MIDDLE

In those old days they thought so when he fought
For lofty things, a youthful radical
Come here to change the world! But now at last
He lectures in back halls to youths who are
What he was in his youth, to acid souls
Who must have bitterness, can take enough
To kill a healthy soul, as fiends for dope
Must have enough to kill a body clean.
And so upon a night Excluded Middle
Is lecturing to prove that life is evil,
Not worth the living—when his auditors
Behold him pale and sway and take his seat,
And later quit the hall, the lecture left
Half finished.

This had happened in a twinkling:
He had made life a punching bag, with fists,
Excluded Middle and Reductio,
Had whacked it back and forth. But just as often
As he had struck it with an argument
That it is not worth living, snap, the bag
Would fly back for another punch. For life
Just like a punching bag will stand your whacks
Of hatred and denial, let you punch
Almost at will. But sometime, like the bag,
The strap gives way, the bag flies up and falls
And lies upon the floor, you've knocked it out.
And this is what Excluded Middle does

This night, the strap breaks with his blows. He proves
His strength, his case and for the first he sees
Life is not worth the living. Life gives up,
Resists no more, flys back no more to him,
But hits the ceiling, snap the strap gives way!
The bag falls to the floor, and lies there still—
Who now shall pick it up, re-fasten it?
And so his color fades, it well may be
The crisis of a long neurosis, well
What caused it? But his eyes are wondrous clear
Perceiving life knocked out. His heart is sick,
He takes his seat, admiring friends swarm round him,
Conduct him to a carriage, he goes home
And sitting by the fire (O what is fire?
The miracle of fire dawns on his thought,
Fire has been near him all these years unseen,
How wonderful is fire!) which warms and soothes
Neuritic pains, he takes the rubber case
Which locks the images of father, mother.
And as he stares upon the oval brow,
The eyes of blue which flash the light of faith,
Preserved like dendrites in this silver shimmer,
Some spectral speculations fill his brain,
Float like a storm above the sorry wreck
Of all his logic tools, machines; for now
Since pains in back and shoulder like to father's
Fall to him at the age that father had them,
Father has entered him, has settled down

To live with him with those neuritic pangs.
Thus are his speculations. Over all
How comes it that a sudden feel of life,
Its wonder, terror, beauty is like father's?
As if the soul of father entered in him
And made the field of consciousness his own,
Emotions, powers of thought his instruments.
That is a horrible atavism, when
You find yourself reverting to a soul
You have not loved, despite yourself becoming
That other soul, and with an out-worn self
Crying for burial on your hands, a life
Not yours till now that waits your new found powers—
Live now or die indeed!

* * * * *

SAMUEL BUTLER ET AL.

Let me consider your emergence
From the milieu of our youth:
We have played all the afternoon, grown hungry.
No meal has been prepared, where have you been?
Toward sun's decline we see you down the path,
And run to meet you, and perhaps you smile,
Or take us in your arms. Perhaps again
You look at us, say nothing, are absorbed,
Or chide us for our dirty frocks or faces.
Of running wild without our meals
You do not speak.

Then in the house, seized with a sudden joy,
After removing gloves and hat, you run,
As with a winged descending flight, and cry,
Half song, half exclamation,
Seize one of us,
Crush one of us with mad embraces, bite
Ears of us in a rapture of affection.
"You shall have supper," then you say.
The stove lids rattle, wood's poked in the fire,
The kettle steams, pots boil, by seven o'clock
We sit down to a meal of hodge-podge stuff.

I understand now how your youth and spirits
Fought back the drabness of the village,
And wonder not you spent the afternoons
With such bright company as Eugenia Turner—
And I forgive you hunger, loneliness.

But when we asked you where you'd been,
Complained of loneliness and hunger, spoke of children
Who lived in order, sat down thrice a day
To cream and porridge, bread and meat.
We think to corner you—alas for us!
Your anger flashes swords! Reasons pour out
Like anvil sparks to justify your way:
"Your father's always gone—you selfish children,
You'd have me in the house from morn till night."
You put us in the wrong—our cause is routed.
We turn to bed unsatisfied in mind,
You've overwhelmed us, not convinced us.
Our sense of wrong defeat breeds resolution
To whip you out when minds grow strong.

Up in the moon-lit room without a light,
(The lamps have not been filled,)
We crawl in unmade beds.
We leave you pouring over paper backs.
We peek above your shoulder.
It is "The Lady in White" you read.
Next morning you are dead for sleep,

You've sat up more than half the night.
We have been playing hours when you arise,
It's nine o'clock when breakfast's served at last,
When school days come I'm always late to school.

Shy, hungry children scuffle at your door,
Eye through the crack, maybe, at nine o'clock,
Find father has returned during the night.
You are all happiness, his idlest word
Provokes your laughter.
He shows us rolls of precious money earned;
He's given you a silk dress, money too
For suits and shoes for us—all is forgiven.
You run about the house,
As with a winged descending flight and cry
Half song, half exclamation.

We're sick so much. But then no human soul
Could be more sweet when one of us is sick.
We run to colds, have measles, mumps, our throats
Are weak, the doctor says. If rooms were warmer,
And clothes were warmer, food more regular,
And sleep more regular, it might be different.
Then there's the well. You fear the water.
He laughs at you, we children drink the water,
Though it tastes bitter, shows white particles:
It may be shreds of rats drowned in the well.
The village has no drainage, blights and mildews

Get in our throats. I spend a certain spring
Bent over, yellow, coughing blood at times,
Sick to somnambulistic sense of things.
You blame him for the well, that's just one thing.
You seem to differ about everything—
You seem to hate each other—when you quarrel
We cry, take sides, sometimes are whipped
For taking sides.

Our broken school days lose us clues,
Some lesson has been missed, the final meaning
And wholeness of the grammar are disturbed—
That shall not be made up in all our life.
The children, save a few, are not our friends,
Some taunt us with your quarrels.
We learn great secrets scrawled in signs or words
Of foulness on the fences. So it is
An American village, in a great Republic,
Where men are free, where therefore goodness, wisdom
Must have their way!

We reach the budding age.
Sweet aches are in our breasts:
Is it spring, or God, or music, is it you?
I am all tenderness for you at times,
Then hate myself for feeling so, my flesh
Crawls by an instinct from you. You repel me
Sometimes with an insidious smile, a look.

What are these phantasies I have? They breed
Strange hatred for you, even while I feel
My soul's home is with you, must be with you
To find my soul's rest. . . .

I must go back a little. At ten years
I play with Paula.
I plait her crowns of flowers, carry her books,
Defend her, watch her, choose her in the games.
You overhear us under the oak tree
Calling her doll our child. You catch my coat
And draw me in the house.
When I resist you whip me cruelly.
To think of whipping me at such time,
And mix the shame of smarting legs and back
With love of Paula!
So I lose Paula.

I am a man at last.
I now can master what you are and see
What you have been. You cannot rout me now,
Or put me in the wrong. Out of old wounds,
Remembrance of your baffling days,
I take great strength and show you
Where you have been untruthful, where a hater,
Where narrow, bitter, growing in on self,
Where you neglected us,
Where you heaped fast destruction on our father—

For now I know that you devoured his soul,
And that no soul that you could not devour
Could have its peace with you.
You've dwindled to a quiet word like this:
"You are unfilial." Which means at last
That I have conquered you, at least it means
That you could not devour me.

Yet am I blind to you? Let me confess
You are the world's whole cycle in yourself:
You can be summer rich and luminous;
You can be autumn, mellow, mystical;
You can be winter with a cheerful hearth;
You can be March, bitter, bright and hard,
Pouring sharp sleet, and showering cutting hail;
You can be April of the flying cloud,
And intermittent sun and musical air.
I am not you while being you,
While finding in myself so much of you.
It tears my other self, which is not you.
My tragedy is this: I do not love you.
Your tragedy is this: my other self
Which triumphs over you, you hate at heart.
Your solace is you have no faith in me.

All quiet now, no March days with you now,
Only the soft coals slumbering in your face,

I saw you totter over a ravine!
Your eyes averted, watching steps,
A light of resignation on your brow.
Your thin-spun hair all gray, blown by the wind
Which swayed the blossomed cherry trees,
Bent last year's reeds,
Shook early dandelions, and tossed a bird
That left a branch with song—
I saw you totter over a ravine!

What were you at the start?
What soul dissatisfaction, sense of wrong,
Of being thwarted, stung you?
What was your shrinking of the flesh;
What fear of being soiled, misunderstood,
What wrath for loneliness which constant hope
Saw turned to fine companionship;
What in your marriage, what in seeing me,
The fruit of marriage, recreated traits
Of face or spirit which you loathed;
What in your father and your mother,
And in the chromosomes from which you grew,
By what mitosis could result at last
In you, in issues of such moment,
In our dissevered beings,
In what the world will take from me
In children, in events?

All quiet now, no March days with you now,
Only the soft coals slumbering in your face,
I saw you totter over a ravine,
And back of you the Furies!

JOHNNY APPLESEED

When the air of October is sweet and cold as the wine
of apples
Hanging ungathered in frosted orchards along the
Grand River,
I take the road that winds by the resting fields and
wander
From Eastmanville to Nunica down to the Villa Cross-
ing.

I look for old men to talk with, men as old as the or-
chards,
Men to tell me of ancient days, of those who built and
planted,
Lichen gray, branch broken, bent and sighing,
Hobbling for warmth in the sun and for places to sit
and smoke.

For there is a legend here, a tale of the croaking old ones
That Johnny Appleseed came here, planted some or-
chards around here,
When nothing was here but the pine trees, oaks and
the beeches,
And nothing was here but the marshes, lake and the
river.

JOHNNY APPLESEED

Peter Van Zylen is ninety and this he tells me:
My father talked with Johnny Appleseed there on the hill-side,
There by the road on the way to Fruitport, saw him
Clearing pines and oaks for a place for an apple orchard.

Peter Van Zylen says: He got that name from the people
For carrying apple-seed with him and planting orchards
All the way from Ohio, through Indiana across here,
Planting orchards, they say, as far as Illinois.

Johnny Appleseed said, so my father told me:
I go to a place forgotten, the orchards will thrive and be here
For children to come, who will gather and eat hereafter.
And few will know who planted, and none will understand.

I laugh, said Johnny Appleseed: Some fellow buys this timber
Five years, perhaps from to-day, begins to clear for barley.
And here in the midst of the timber is hidden an apple orchard.
How did it come here? Lord! Who was it here before me?

Yes, I was here before him, to make these places of worship,
Labor and laughter and gain in the late October.
Why did I do it, eh? Some folks say I am crazy.
Where do my labors end? Far west, God only knows!

Said Johnny Appleseed there on the hill-side: Listen!
Beware the deceit of nurseries, sellers of seeds of the apple.
Think! You labor for years in trees not worth the raising.
You planted what you knew not, bitter or sour for sweet.

No luck more bitter than poor seed, but one as bitter:
The planting of perfect seed in soil that feeds and fails,
Nourishes for a little, and then goes spent forever.
Look to your seed, he said, and remember the soil.

And after that is the fight: the foe curled up at the root,
The scale that crumples and deadens, the moth in the blossoms
Becoming a life that coils at the core of a thing of beauty:
You bite your apple, a worm is crushed on your tongue!

And it's every bit the truth, said Peter Van Zylen.
So many things love an apple as well as ourselves.
A man must fight for the thing he loves, to possess it:
Apples, freedom, heaven, said Peter Van Zylen.

THE LOOM

My brother, the god, and I grow sick
Of heaven's heights.
We plunge to the valley to hear the tick
Of days and nights.
We walk and loiter around the Loom
To see, if we may,
The Hand that smashes the beam in the gloon
To the shuttle's play;
Who grows the wool, who cards and spins,
Who clips and ties;
For the storied weave of the Gobelins,
Who draughts and dyes.

But whether you stand or walk around
You shall but hear
A murmuring life, as it were the sound
Of bees or a sphere.
No Hand is seen, but still you may feel
A pulse in the thread,
And thought in every lever and wheel
Where the shuttle sped,
Dripping the colors, as crushed and urged—
Is it cochineal?—
Shot from the shuttle, woven and merged

A tale to reveal.
Woven and wound in a bolt and dried
As it were a plan.
Closer I looked at the thread and cried
The thread is man!

Then my brother curious, strong and bold,
Tugged hard at the bolt
Of the woven life; for a length unrolled
The cryptic cloth.
He gasped for labor, blind for the moult
Of the up-winged moth.
While I saw a growth and a mad crusade
That the Loom had made;
Land and water and living things,
Till I grew afraid
For mouths and claws and devil wings,
And fangs and stings,
And tiger faces with eyes of hell
In caves and holes.
And eyes in terror and terrible
For awakened souls.

I stood above my brother, the god
Unwinding the roll.
And a tale came forth of the woven slain
Sequent and whole,
Of flint and bronze, trowel and hod,

The wheel and the plane,
The carven stone and the graven clod
Painted and baked.
And cromlechs, proving the human heart
Has always ached;
Till it puffed with blood and gave to art
The dream of the dome;
Till it broke and the blood shot up like fire
In tower and spire.

And here was the Persian, Jew and Goth
In the weave of the cloth;
Greek and Roman, Ghibelline, Guelph,
Angel and elf.
They were dyed in blood, tangled in dreams
Like a comet's streams.
And here were surfaces red and rough
In the finished stuff,
Where the knotted thread was proud and rebelled
As the shuttle proved
The fated warp and woof that held
When the shuttle moved;
And pressed the dye which ran to loss
In a deep maroon
Around an altar, oracle, cross
Or a crescent moon.
Around a face, a thought, a star
In a riot of war!

Then I said to my brother, the god, let be,
Though the thread be crushed,
And the living things in the tapestry
Be woven and hushed;
The Loom has a tale, you can see, to tell,
And a tale has told.
I love this Gobelin epical
Of scarlet and gold.
If the heart of a god may look in pride
At the wondrous weave
It is something better to Hands which guide—
I see and believe.

* * * * *

DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

Look here, Jack:
You don't act natural. You have lost your laugh.
You haven't told me any stories. You
Just lie there half asleep. What's on your mind?

JACK

What time is it? Where is my watch?

FLORENCE

Your watch
Under your pillow! You don't think I'd take it.
Why, Jack, what talk for you.

JACK

Well, never mind,
Let's pack no ice.

FLORENCE

What's that?

JACK

No quarreling—
What is the time?

DIALOGUE AT PERKO'S

FLORENCE

Look over towards my dresser—
My clock says half-past eleven.

JACK

Listen to that—
That hurdy-gurdy's playing Holy Night,
And on this street.

FLORENCE

And why not on this street?

JACK

You may be right. It may as well be played
Where you live as in front of where I work,
Some twenty stories up. I think you're right.

FLORENCE

Say, Jack, what is the matter? Come! be gay.
Tell me some stories. Buy another bottle.
Just think you make a lot of money, Jack.
You're young and prominent. They all know you.
I hear your name all over town. I see
Your picture in the papers. What's the matter?

JACK

I've lost my job for one thing.

FLORENCE

You don't mean it!

JACK

They used me and then fired me, same as you.
If you don't make the money, out you go.

FLORENCE

Yes, out I go. But, there are other places.

JACK

On further down the street.

FLORENCE

Not yet a while.

JACK

Not yet for me, but still the question is
Whether to fight it out for up or down,
Or run from everything, be free.

FLORENCE

You can't do that.

JACK

Why not?

FLORENCE

No more than I.
Oh well perhaps, if a nice man came by
To marry me then I could get away.
It happens all the time. Last week in fact
Christ Perko married Rachel who lived here.
He's rich as cream.

JACK

What corresponds to marriage
To take me from slavery?

FLORENCE

Money is everything.

JACK

Yes, everything and nothing.
Christ Perko's rich, Christ Perko runs this house,
The madam merely acts as figure-head;
Keeps check upon the girls and on the wine.
She's just the editor, and yet I'd rather
Be editor than owner. I was editor.
My Perko was the owner of a pulp mill,
Incorporate through some multi-millionaires,
And all our lesser writers were the girls,
Like you and Rachel.

FLORENCE

But you know before
He married Rachel, he was lover to
The madam here.

JACK

The stories tally, for
The pulp mill took my first assistant editor
To wife by making him the editor.
And I was fired just as the madam here
Lost out with Perko.

FLORENCE

This is growing funny. . . .
Ahem! I'll ask you something—
As if I were a youth and you a girl—
How were you ruined first?

JACK

The same as you:
You ran away from school. It was romance.
You thought you loved this flashy travelling man.
And I—I loved adventure, loved the truth.
I wanted to destroy the force called "They."
There is no "They"—we're all together here,
And everyone must live, Christ Perko too,
The pulp-mill, the policeman, magistrate,

The alderman, the precinct captain too,
And you the girls, myself the editor,
And all the lesser writers. Here we are
Thrown in one integrated lot. You see
There is no "They," except the terms, the thought
Which ramifies and vivifies the whole. . . .
So I came to the city, went to work
Reporting for a paper. Having said
There is no "They"—I've freed myself to say
What bitter things I choose. For how they drive you,
And terrify you, mock you, ridicule you,
And call you cub and greenhorn, send you round
To courts and dirty places, make you risk
Your body and your life, and make you watch
The rules about your writing; what's tabooed,
What names are to be cursed or to be praised,
What interests, policies to be subserved,
And what to undermine. So I went through,
Until I had a desk, wrote editorials—
Now said I to myself, I'm free at last.
But no, my manager, your madam, mark you,
Kept eye on me, for he was under watch
Of some Christ Perko. So my manager
Blue penciled me when I touched certain subjects.
But, as he was a just man, loved me too
He gave me things to write where he could let
My conscience have full scope, as you might live
In this house where you saw the man you loved,

And no one else, though living in this hell.
For I lived in a hell, who saw around me
Such lying, hatred, malice, prostitution.
And when this offer came to be an editor
Of a great magazine, I seemed to feel
My courage and my virtue given reward.
Now, I should pass on poems, and on stories,
Creations of free souls. It was not so.
The poems and the stories one could see
Were written to be sold, to please a taste,
Placate a prejudice, keep still alive
An era dying, ready for the tomb,
Already smelling. And that was not all.
Just as the madam here must make report
To Perko, so the magazine had to run
To suit the pulp mill. As the madam here,
Assistant to Christ Perko, must keep friends
With alderman, policemen, magistrates,
So I was just a wheel in a machine
To keep it running with such larger wheels,
And by them run, of policies, and politics
Of State and Nation. Here was I locked in
And given dope to keep me still lest I
Cry out and wake the copper—who's the copper
For such as I was? If he heard me cry
How could he raid the magazine? If he raided
Where was the court to take me and the rest—
That's it, where is the court?

FLORENCE

It seems to me
You're bad as I am.

JACK

I am worse than you:
I poison minds with thoughts they take as good.
I drug an era, make it foul or dull—
You only sicken bodies here and there.
But you know how it is. You have remorse,
You fight it down, hush it with sophistry.
You think about the world, about your fellows:
You see that everyone is selling self,
Little or much somehow. You feed your body,
Try to be hearty, take things as they come.
You take athletics, try to keep your strength,
As you hear music, laugh, drink wine, and smoke,
Are bathed and coifed to keep your beauty fresh.
And through it all the soul's and body's needs,
The pleasures, interests, passions of our life,
The cry that comes from somewhere: "Live, O Soul,
The time is passing," move and claim your strength.
Till you forget yourself, forget the boy
And man you were, forget the dreams you had,
The creed you wished to live by—yes, what's worse,
See dreams you had, grown tawdry, see your creed
Cracked through and crumbled like a falling house.
And then you say: What is the difference?

As you might ask what virtue is and why
Should woman keep it.
I have reached this place
Save for one truth I hold to, shall still hold to:
As long as I have breath: The man who sees not,
Or cares not for the Truth that keeps the world
From vast disintegration is a brute,
And marked for a brute's death—that is his hell.
'Twas loyalty to this truth that made me lose
My place as editor. For when they came
And tried to make me pass an article
To poison millions with, I said, "I won't,
I won't by God. I'll quit before I do."
And then they said, "You quit," and so I quit.

FLORENCE

And so you took to drink and came to me!
And that's the same as if I came to you
And used you as an editor. I am nothing
But just a poor reporter in this house—
But now I quit.

JACK

Where are you going, Florence?

FLORENCE

I'm going to a village or a farm
Where I'll get up at six instead of twelve,

Where I'll wear calico instead of silk,
And where there'll be no furnace in the house.
And where the carpet which has kept me here
And keeps you here as editor is not.
I'm going to economize my life
By freeing it of systems which grow rich
By using me, and for the privilege
Bestow these gaudy clothes and perfumed bed.
I hate you now, because I hate my life.

JACK

Wait! Wait a minute.

FLORENCE

Dinah, call a cab!

* * * * *

SIR GALAHAD

I met Hosea Job on Randolph Street
Who said to me: "I'm going for the train,
I want you with me."
And it happened then
My mind was hard, as muscles of the back
Grow hard resisting cold or shock or strain
And need the osteopath to be made supple,
To give the nerves and streams of life a chance.
Hosea Job was just the osteopath
To loose, relax my mood. And so I said
"All right"—and went.

Hosea was a man
Whom nothing touched of danger, or of harm.
His life was just a rare-bit dream, where some one
Seems like to fall before a truck or train—
Instead he walks across them. Or you see
Shadows of falling things, great buildings topple,
Pianos skid like bulls from hellish corners
And chase the oblivious fool who stands and smiles.
The buildings slant and sway like monstrous search-
lights,
But never touch him. And the mad piano
Comes up to him, puts down its angry head,

Runs out a friendly tongue and licks his hand,
And lows a symphony.

By which I mean
Hosea had some money, and would sign
A bond or note for any man who asked him.
He'd rent a house and leave it, rent another,
Then rent a farm, move out from town and in.
He'd have the leases of superfluous places
Cancelled some how, was never sued for rent.
One time he had a fancy he would see
South Africa, took ship with a load of mules,
First telegraphing home from New Orleans
He'd be back in the Spring. Likewise he went
To Klondike with the rush. I think he owned
More kinds of mining stock than there were mines.
He had more quaint, peculiar men for friends
Than one could think were living. He believed
In every doctrine in its time, that promised
Salvation for the world. He took no thought
For life or for to-morrow, or for health,
Slept with his windows closed, ate what he wished.
And if he cut his finger, let it go.
I offered him peroxide once, he laughed.
And when I asked him if his soul was saved
He only said: "I see things. I lie back
And take it easy. Nothing can go wrong
In any serious sense."

So many thought
Hosea was a nut, and others thought,
That I was just a nut for liking him.
And what would any man of business say
If he knew that I didn't ask a question,
But simply went with him to take the train
That day he asked me.

And the train had gone
Five miles or so when I said: "Where you going?"
Hosea answered, and it made me start—
Hosea answered simply, "We are going
To see Sir Galahad."

It made me start
To hear Hosea say this, for I thought
He was now really off. But, I looked at him
And saw his eyes were sane.

"Sir Galahad?
"Who is Sir Galahad?"

Hosea answered:
"I'm going up to see Sir Galahad,
And sound him out about re-entering
The game and run for governor again."

So then I knew he was the man our fathers
Worked with and knew and called Sir Galahad,

Now in retirement fifteen years or so.
Well, I was twenty-five when he was famous.
Sir Galahad was forty then, and now
Must be some fifty-five while I am forty.
So flashed across my thought the matter of time
And ages. So I thought of all he did:
Of how he went from faith to faith in politics
And ran for every office up to governor,
And ran for governor four times or so,
And never was elected to an office.
He drew more bills to remedy injustice,
Improve the courts, relieve the poor, reform
Administration, than the legislature
Could read, much less digest or understand.
The people beat him and the leaders flogged him.
They shut the door against his face until
He had no place to go except a farm
Among the stony hills, and there he went.
And thither we were going to see the knight,
And call him from his solitude to the fight
Against injustice, greed.

So we got off
The train at Alden, just a little village
Of fifty houses lying beneath the sprawl
Of hills and hills. And here there was a stillness
Made lonelier by an anvil ringing, by
A plow-man's voice at intervals.

Here Hosea
Engaged a horse and buggy, and we drove
And wound about a crooked road between
Great hills that stood together like the backs
Of elephants in a herd, where boulders lay
As thick as hail in places. Ruined pines
Stood like burnt matches. There was one which stuck
Against a single cloud so white it seemed
A bursted bale of cotton.

We reached the summit
And drove along past orchards, past a field
Level and green, kept like a garden, rich
Against the coming harvest. Here we met
A scarecrow man, driving a scarecrow horse
Hitched to a wobbly wagon. And we stopped,
The scarecrow stopped. The scarecrow and Hosea
Talked much of people and of farming—I
Sat listening, and I gathered from the talk,
And what Hosea told me as we drove,
That once this field so level and so green
The scarecrow owned. He had cleaned out the stumps,
And tried to farm it, failed, and lost the field,
But raged to lose it, thought he might succeed
In further time. Now having lost the field
So many years ago, could be a scarecrow,
And drive a scarecrow horse, yet laugh again
And have no care, the sorrow healed.

It seemed
The clearing of the stumps was scarce a starter
Toward a field of profit. For in truth,
The soil possessed a secret which the scarecrow
Never went deep enough to learn about.
His problem was all stumps. Not solving that,
He sold it to a farmer who out-slaved
The busiest bee, but only half succeeded.
He tried to raise potatoes, made a failure.
He planted it in beans, had half a crop.
He sowed wheat once and reaped a stack of straw.
The secret of the soil eluded him.
And here Hosea laughed: "This fellow's failure
Was just the thing that gave another man
The secret of the soil. For he had studied
The properties of soils and fertilizers.
And when he heard the field had failed to raise
Potatoes, beans and wheat, he simply said:
There are other things to raise: the question is
Whether the soil is suited to the things
He tried to raise, or whether it needs building
To raise the things he tried to raise, or whether
It must be builded up for anything.
At least he said the field is clear of stumps.
Pass on your field, he said. If I lose out
I'll pass it on. The field is his, he said
Who can make something grow.

And so this field
Of waving wheat along which we were driving
Was just the very field the scarecrow man
Had failed to master, as that other man
Had failed to master after him.

Hosea
Kept talking of this field as we drove on.
That field, he said, is economical
Of men compared with many fields. You see
It only used two men. To grub the stumps
Took all the scarecrow's strength. That other man
Ran off to Oklahoma from this field.
I have known fields that ate a dozen men
In country such as this. The field remains
And laughs and waits for some one who divines
The secret of the field. Some farmers live
To prove what can't be done, and narrow down
The guess of what is possible. It's right
A certain crop should prosper and another
Should fail, and when a farmer tries to raise
A crop before it's time, he wastes himself
And wastes the field to try.

We now were climbing
To higher hills and rockier fields. Hosea
Had fallen into silence. I was thinking
About Sir Galahad, was wondering

Which man he was, the scarecrow, or the farmer
Who didn't know the seed to sow, or whether
He might still prove the farmer raising wheat,
Now we were come to give him back the field
With all the stumps grubbed out, the secret lying
Revealed and ready for the appointed hands.

We passed an orchard growing on a knoll
And saw a barn perked on a rocky hill,
And near the barn a house. Hosea said:
"This is Sir Galahad's." We tied the horse.
And we were in the silence of the country
At mid-day on a day in June. No bird
Was singing, fowl was cackling, cow was lowing,
No dog was barking. All was summer stillness.
We crossed a back-yard past a windlass well,
Dodged under clothes lines through a place of chips,
Walked in a path along the house. I said:
"Sir Galahad is ploughing, or perhaps
Is mending fences, cutting weeds." It seemed
Too bad to come so far and not to find him.
"We'll find him," said Hosea. "Let us sit
Under that tree and wait for him."

And then
We turned the corner of the house and there
Under a tree an old man sat, his head
Bowed down upon his breast, locked fast in sleep.

And by his feet a dog half blind and fat
Lay dozing, too inert to rise and bark.

Hosea gripped my arm. "Be still" he said.
"Let's ask him where Sir Galahad is," said I.
And then Hosea whispered, "God forgive me,
I had forgotten, you too have forgotten.
The man is old, he's very old. The years
Go by unnoticed. Come! Sir Galahad
Should sleep and not be waked."

We tip-toed off
And hurried back to Alden for the train.

ST. DESERET

You wonder at my bright round eyes, my lips
Pressed tightly like a venomous rosette.
Thus do me honor by so much, fond wretch,
And praise my Persian beauty, dulcet voice.
But oh you know me, read me, passion blinds
Your vision not at all, and you have passion
For me and what I am. How can you be so?
Hold me so bear-like, take my lips with yours,
Bury your face in these my russet tresses,
And yet not lose your vision? So I love you,
And fear you too. How idle to deny it
To you who know I fear you.

Here am I
Who answer you what e'er you choose to ask.
You stride about my rooms and open books,
And say when did he give you this? You pick
His photograph from mantels, dressers, drawl
Out of ironic strength, and smile the while:
"You did not love this man." You probe my soul
About his courtship, how I ran away,
How he pursued with gifts from city to city,
Threw bouquets to me from the pit, or stood

Like Cleopatra's Giant negro guard,
Watchful and waiting at the green-room door.
So, devil, that you are, with needle pricks,
One little question at a time, you've inked
The story in my flesh. And now at last
You smile and say I killed him. Well, it's true.
But what a death he had! Envy him that.
Your frigid soul can never win the death
I gave him.

Listen since you know already
All but the subtlest matters. How you laugh!
You know these too? Well, only I can tell them.

First 'twas a piteous thing to see a man
So love a woman, see a living thing
So love another. Why he could not touch
My hand but that his heart went up ten beats.
His eyes would grow as bright as flames, his breath
Come short when speaking. When he felt my breast
Crush soft around him he would reel and walk
Away from me, while I stood like a snake
Poised for the strike, as quiet and possessed
As a dead breeze. And you can have me wholly,
And pet and pat me like a favored child,
And let me go my way, while you turn back
To what you left for me.

Not so with him:
I was all through his blood, had made his flesh
My flesh, his nerves, brain, soul all mine at last,
Dreams, thoughts, emotions, hungers all my own.
So that he lived two lives, his own and mine,
With one poor body, which he gave to me.
Save that he could not give what I pushed back
Into his hands to use for me and live
My pities, hatreds, loves and passions with.
I loved all this and thrived upon it, still
I did not love him. Then why marry him?
Why don't you see? It meant so much to him.
And 'twas a little thing for me to do.
His loneliness, his hunger, his great passion
That showed in his poor eyes, his broken breath,
His chivalry, his gifts, his poignant letters,
His failing health, why even woman's cruelty
Cannot deny such passion. Woman's cruelty
Takes other means for finding its expression.
And mine found its expression—you have guessed
And so I tell you all.

We were married then.
He made a sacrament of our nuptials,
Knelt with closed eyes beside the bed, my lips
Pressed to his brow and throat. Unveiled my breast
And looked, then closed his eyes. He did not take me
As man takes his possession, nature's way,

In triumph of life, in lightning, no, he came
A suppliant, a worshipper, and whispered:
"What angel child may lie upon the breast
Of this it's angel mother."

Well, you see
The tears came in my eyes, for pity of him,
Who made so much of what I had to give,
And could give easily whether 'twas my rapture
To give or to withhold. And in that moment
Contempt of which I had been scarcely conscious
Lying diffused like dew around my heart
Drained down itself into my heart's dark cup
To one bright drop of vital power, where
He could not see it, scarcely knew that something
Gradually drugged the potion that he drank
In life with me.

So we were wed a year,
And he was with me hourly, till at last
I could not breathe for him, while he could breathe
No where but where I was. Then the bazaar
Was coming on where I was to dance, and he
Had long postponed a trip to England where
Great interests waited for him, and with kisses
I pushed him to his duty, and he went
Shame stricken for a duty long postponed,
Unable to retort against my words

When I said "You must go;" for well he knew
He should have gone before. And as for going
I pleaded the bazaar and hate of travel,
And got him off, and freed myself to breathe.

His life had been too fast, his years too many
To stand the strain that came. There was the worry
About the business, and the labor over it.
There was the war, and all the fear and turmoil
In London for the war. But most of all
There was the separation. And his letters!
You've read them, wretch. Such letters never were
Of aching loneliness and pining love
And hope that lives across three thousand miles,
And waits the day to travel them, and fear
Of something which may bar the way forever:
A storm, a wreck, a submarine and no day
Without a letter or a cablegram.
And look at the endearments—oh you fiend
To pick their words to pieces like a botanist
Who cuts a flower up for his microscope.
And oh myself who let you see these letters.
Why did I do it? Rather why is it
You master me, even as I mastered him?

At last he finished, got his passage back.
He had been gone three months. And all these letters
Showed how he starved for me, and scarce could wait

To take me in his arms again, would choke
With fast and heavy feeding.

Well, you see
The contempt I spoke of which lay long diffused
Like dew around my heart, and which at once
Drained down itself into my heart's dark cup
Grew brighter, bitterer, for this obvious hunger,
This thirst which could not wait, the piteous trembling.
And all the while it seemed he thought his love
Grew sacreder as it grew uncontrolled,
And marked by trembling, choking, tears and sighs.
This is not love which should be, has no use
In this or any world. And as for me
I could not stand it longer. And I thought
Of what was best to do: if 'twas not best
To kill him as the queen bee kills the mate
In rapture's own excess.

Then he arrived.
I went to meet him in the car, pretended
The feed pipe broke while I was on the way.
I was not at the station when he came.
I got back to the house and found him gone.
He had run through the rooms calling my name,
So Mary told me. Then he went around
From place to place, wherever in the village
He thought to find me.

Soon I heard his steps,
The key in the door, his winded breath, his call,
His running, stumbling up the stairs, while I
Stood silent as a shadow in our room,
My round bright eyes grown brighter for the light
His life was feeding them. And then he stood
Breathless and trembling in the door-way, stood
Transfixed with ecstacy, then rushed and caught me
And broke into loud tears.

It had to end.
One or the other of us had to die.
I could not die but by a violence,
And he could die by love alone, and love
I gave him to his death.

Why tell you details
And ways with which I maddened him, and whipped
The energies of love? You have extracted
The secret in the main, that 'twas from love
He came to death. His life had been too fast,
His years too many for the daily rapture
I gave him after three months' separation.
And so he died one morning, made me free
Of nothing but his presence in the flesh.
His love is on me yet, and its effect.
And now you're here to slave me differently—
No soul is ever free.

* * * * *

HEAVEN IS BUT THE HOUR

Eyes wide for wisdom, calm for joy or pain,
Bright hair alloyed with silver, scarcely gold.
And gracious lips flower pressed like buds to hold
The guarded heart against excess of rain.
Hands spirit tipped through which a genius plays
With paints and clays,
And strings in many keys—
Clothed in an aura of thought as soundless as a flood
Of sun-shine where there is no breeze.
So is it light in spite of rhythm of blood,
Or turn of head, or hands that move, unite—
Wind cannot dim or agitate the light.
From Plato's idea stepping, wholly wrought
From Plato's dream, made manifest in hair,
Eyes, lips and hands and voice,
As if the stored up thought
From the earth sphere
Had given down the being of your choice
Conjured by the dream long sought.

* * * * *

For you have moved in madness, rapture, wrath
In and out of the path
Drawn by the dream of a face.
You have been watched, as star-men watch a star

That leaves its way, returns and leaves its way,
Until the exploring watchers find, can trace
A hidden star beyond their sight, whose sway
Draws the erratic star so long observed—
So have you wandered, swerved.

* * * * *

Always pursued and lost,
Sometimes half found, half-faced,
Such years we waste
With the almost:
The lips flower pressed like buds to hold
Guarded the heart of the flower,
But over them eyes not hued as the Dream foretold.
Or to find the lips too rich and the dower
Of eyes all gaiety
Where wisdom scarce can be.
Or to find the eyes, but to find offence
In fingers where the sense
Falters with colors, strings,
Not touching with closed eyes, out of an immanence
Of flame and wings.
Or to find the light, but to find it set behind
An eye which is not your dream, nor the shadow thereof,
As it were your lamp in a stranger's window.
And so almost to find
In the great weariness of love.

* * * *

Now this is the tragedy:
If the Idea did not move
Somewhere in the realm of Love,
Clothing itself in flesh at last for you to see,
You could scarcely follow the gleam.
And the tragedy is when Life has made you over,
And denied you, and dulled your dream,
And you no longer count the cost,
Nor the past lament,
You are sitting oblivious of your discontent
Beside the Almost—
And then the face appears
Evoked from the Idea by your dead desire,
And blinds and burns you like fire.
And you sit there without tears,
Though thinking it has come to kill you, or mock your youth
With its half of the truth.

* * * * *

A beach as yellow as gold
Daisied with tents for a lovely mile.
And a sea that edges and walls the sand with blue,
Matching the heaven without a seam,
Save for the threads of foam that hold
With stitches the canopy rare as the tile
Of old Damascus. And O the wind
Which roars to the roaring water brightened

By the beating wings of the sun!
And here I walk, not seeking the Dream,
As men walk absent of heart or mind
Who have no wish for a sorrow lightened
Since all things now seem lost or won.
And here it is that your face appears!
Like a star brushed out from leaves by a breeze
When day's in the sky, though evening nears.
You are here by a tent with your little brood,
And I approach in a quiet mood
And see you, know that the Destinies
Have surrendered you at last.
Voice, lips and hands and the light of the eyes.

* * * * *

And I who have asked so much discover
That you find in me the man and lover
You have divined and visualized,
In quiet day dreams. And what is strange
Your boy of eight is subtly guised
In fleeting looks that half resemble
Something in me. Two souls may range
Mid this earth's billion souls for life,
And hide their hunger or dissemble.
For there are two at least created,
Endowed with alien powers that draw,
And kindred powers that by some law
Bind souls as like as sister, brother.

There are two at least who are for each other.
If we are such, it is not fated
You are for him, howe'er belated
The time's for us.

* * * * *

And yet is not the time gone by?
Your garden has been planted, dear.
And mine with weeds is over-grown.
Oh yes! 'tis only late July!
We can replant, ere frosts appear,
Gather the blossoms we have sown.
And I have preached that hearts should seize
The hour that brings realities. . . .

Yes, I admit it all, we crush
Under our feet the world's contempt.
But when I raise the cup, it's blush
Reveals the snake's eyes, there's a hush
While a hand writes upon the wall:
Life cannot be re-made, exempt
From life that has been, something's gone
Out of the soil, in life updrawn
To growths that vine, and tangle, crawl,
Withered in part, or gone to seed.
'Tis not the same, though you have freed
The soil from what was grown. . . .

* * * * *

HEAVEN IS BUT THE HOUR

Heaven is but the hour
Of the planting of the flower.
But heaven is the blossom to be,
Of the one Reality.
And heaven cannot undo the once sown ground.
But heaven is love in the pursuing,
And in the memory of having found. . . .

The rocks in the river make light and sound
And show that the waters search and move.
And what is time but an infinite whole
Revealed by the breaks in thought, desire?
To put it away is to know one's soul.
Love is music unheard and fire
Too rare for eyes; between hurt beats
The heart detects it, sees how pure
Its essence is, through heart defeats.—
You are the silence making sure
The sound with which it has to cope,
My sorrow and as well my hope.

* * * * *

VICTOR RAFOLSKI ON ART

You dull Goliaths clothed in coats of blue,
Strained and half bursted by the swell of flesh,
Topped by Gorilla heads. You Marmoset,
Trained scoundrel, taught to question and ensnare,
I hate you, hate your laws and hate your courts.
Hands off, give me a chair, now let me be.
I'll tell you more than you can think to ask me.
I love this woman, but what is love to you?
What is it to your laws or courts? I love her.
She loves me, if you'd know. I entered her room—
She stood before me naked, shrank a little,
Cried out a little, calmed her sudden cry
When she saw amiable passion in my eyes—
She loves me, if you'd know. I saw in her eyes
More in those moments than whole hours of talk
From witness stands exculpate could make clear
My innocence.

But if I did a crime
My excuse is hunger, hunger for more life.
Oh what a world, where beauty, rapture, love
Are walled in and locked up like coal or food
And only may he had by purchasers
From whose fat fingers slip the unheeded gold.

Oh what a world where beauty lies in waste,
While power and freedom skulk with famished lips
Too tightly pressed for curses.

So do men,
Save for the thousandth man, deny themselves
And live in meagreness to make sure a life
Of meagreness by hearth stones long since stale;
And live in ways, companionships as fixed
As the geared figures of the Strassburg clock.
You wonder at war? Why war lets loose desires,
Emotions long repressed. Would you stop war?
Then let men live. The moral equivalent
Of war is freedom. Art does not suffice—
Religion is not life, but life is living.
And painted cherries to the hungry thrush
Is art to life. The artist lived his work.
You cannot live his life who love his work.
You are the thrush that pecks at painted cherries
Who hope to live through art. Beer-soaked Goliaths,
The story's coming of her nakedness
Be patient for a time.

All this I learned
While painting pictures no one ever bought,
Till hunger drove me to this servile work
As butler in her father's house, with time
On certain days to walk the galleries
And look at pictures, marbles. For I saw

I was not living while I painted pictures.
I was not living working for a crust,
I was not living walking galleries:
All this was but vicarious life which felt
Through gazing at the thing the artist made,
In memory of the life he lived himself:
As we preserve the fragrance of a flower
By drawing off its essence in a bottle,
Where color, fluttering leaves, are thrown away
To get the inner passion of the flower
Extracted to a bottle that a queen
May act the flower's part.

Say what you will,
Make laws to strangle life, shout from your pulpits,
Your desks of editors, your woolsack benches
Where judges sit, that this dull hypocrite,
You call the State, has fashioned life aright—
The secret is abroad, from eye to eye
The secret passes from poor eyes that wink
In boredom, in fatigue, in furious strength
Roped down or barred, that what the human heart
Dreams of and hopes for till the aspiring flame
Flaps in the guttered candle and goes out,
Is love for body and for spirit, love
To satisfy their hunger. Yet what is it,
This earth, this life, what is it but a meadow
Where spirits are left free a little while

Within a little space, so long as strength,
Flesh, blood increases to the day of use
As roasts or stews wherewith this witless beast,
Society may feed himself and keep
His olden shape and power?

Fools go crop
The herbs they turn you to, and starve yourself
For what you want, and count it righteousness,
No less you covet love. Poor shadows sighing,
Across the curtain racing! Mangled souls
Pecking so feebly at the painted cherries,
Inhaling from a bottle what was lived
These summers gone! You know, and scarce deny
That what we men desire are horses, dogs,
Loves, women, insurrections, travel, change,
Thrill in the wreck and rapture for the change,
And re-adjusted order.

As I turned
From painting and from art, yet found myself
Full of all lusts while bound to menial work
Where my eyes daily rested on this woman
A thought came to me like a little spark
One sees far down the darkness of a cave,
Which grows into a flame, a blinding light
As one approaches it, so did this thought
Both burn and blind me: For I loved this woman,

I wanted her, why should I lose this woman?
What was there to oppose possession? Will?
Her will, you say? I am not sure, but then
Which will is better, mine or hers? Which will
Deserves achievement? Which has rights above
The other? I desire her, her desire
Is not toward me, which of these two desires
Shall triumph? Why not mine for me and hers
For her, at least the stronger must prevail,
And wreck itself or bend all else before it.
That millionaire who wooed her, tried in vain
To overwhelm her will with gold, and I
With passion, boldness would have overwhelmed it,
And what's the difference?

But as I said
I walked the galleries. When I stood in the yard
Bare armed, bare throated at my work, she came
And gazed upon me from her window. I
Could feel the exhausting influence of her eyes.
Then in a concentration which was blindness
To all else, so bewilderment of mind,
I'd go to see Watteau's Antiope
Where he sketched Zeus in hunger, drawing back
The veil that hid her sleeping nakedness.
There was Correggio's too, on whom a satyr
Smiled for his amorous wonder. A Semele,
Done by an unknown hand, a thing of lightning

Moved through by Zeus who seized her as the flames
Consumed her ravished beauty.

So I looked,
And trembled, then returned perhaps to find
Her eyes upon me conscious, calm, elate,
And radiate with lashes of surprise,
Delight as when a star is still but shines.
And on this night somehow our natures worked
To climaxes. For first she dressed for dinner
To show more back and bosom than before.
And as I served her, her down-looking eyes
Were more than glances. Then she dropped her napkin.
Before I could begin to bend she leaned
And let me see—oh yes, she let me see
The white foam of her little breasts caressing
The scarlet flame of silk, a swooning shore
Of bright carnations. It was from such foam
That Venus rose. And as I stooped and gave
The napkin to her she pushed out a foot,
And then I coughed for breath grown short, and she
Concealed a smile—and you, you jailers laugh
Coarse-mouthed, and mock my hunger.

I go on,
Observe how courage, boldness mark my steps!
At nine o'clock she climbs to her boudoir.
I finding errands in the hallway hear

The desultory taking up of books,
And through her open door, see her at last
Cast off her dinner gown and to the bath
Step like a ray of moonlight. Then she snaps
The light on where the onyx tub and walls
Dazzle the air. I enter then her room
And stand against the closed door, do not pry
Upon her in the bath. Give her the chance
To fly me, fight me standing face to face.
I hear her flounder in the water, hear
Hands slap and slip with water breast and arms;
Hear little sighs and shudders and the roughness
Of crash towels on her back, when in a minute
She stands with back toward me in the doorway,
A sea-shell glory, pink and white to hair
Sun-lit, a lily crowned with powdered gold.
She turned toward her dresser then and shook
White dust of talcum on her arms, and looked
So lovingly upon her tense straight breasts,
Touching them under with soft tapering hands
To blue eyes deepening like a brazier flame
Turned by a sudden gust. Who gives her these,
The thought ran through me, for her joy alone
And not for mine?

So I stood there like Zeus
Coming in thunder to Semele, like
The diety of Watteau. Correggio

Had never painted me a satyr there
Drinking her beauty in, so worshipful,
My will subdued in worship of her beauty
To obey her will.

And then she turned and saw me,
And faced me in her nakedness, nor tried
To hide it from me, faced me immovable
A Mona Lisa smile upon her lips.
And let me plead my cause, make known my love,
Speak out my torture, wearing still the smile.
Let me approach her till I almost touched
The whiteness of her bosom. Then it seemed
That smile of hers not wilting me she clapped
Hands over eyes and said: "I am afraid—
Oh no, it cannot be—what would they say?"
Then rushing in the bathroom, quick she slammed
The door and shrieked: "You scoundrel, go—you
beast."
My dream went up like paper charred and whirled
Above a hearth. Thrilling I stood alone
Amid her room and saw my life, our life
Embodied in this woman lately there
Lying and cowardly. And as I turned
To leave the room, her father and the gardener
Pounced on me, threw me down a flight of stairs
And turned me over, stunned, to you the law
Here with these others who have stolen coal

To keep them warm, as I have stolen beauty
To keep from freezing in this arid country
Of winter winds on which the dust of custom
Rides like a fog.

Now do your worst to me!

THE LANDSCAPE

You and your landscape! There it lies
Stripped, resuming its disguise,
Clothed in dreams, made bare again,
Symbol infinite of pain,
Rapture, magic, mystery
Of vanished days and days to be.
There's its sea of tidal grass
Over which the south winds pass,
And the sun-set's Tuscan gold
Which the distant windows hold
For an instant like a sphere
Bursting ere it disappear.
There's the dark green woods which throve
In the spell of Leese's Grove.
And the winding of the road;
And the hill o'er which the sky
Stretched its pallied vacancy
Ere the dawn or evening glowed.
And the wonder of the town
Somewhere from the hill-top down
Nestling under hills and woods
And the meadow's solitudes.

* * * *

And your paper knight of old
Secrets of the landscape told.
And the hedge-rows where the pond
Took the blue of heavens beyond
The hastening clouds of gusty March.
There you saw their wrinkled arch
Where the East wind cracks his whips
Round the little pond and clips
Main-sails from your toppled ships. . . .

Landscape that in youth you knew
Past and present, earth and you!
All the legends and the tales
Of the uplands, of the vales;
Sounds of cattle and the cries
Of ploughmen and of travelers
Were its soul's interpreters.
And here the lame were always lame.
Always gray the gray of head.
And the dead were always dead
Ere the landscape had become
Your cradle, as it was their tomb.

* * * * *

And when the thunder storms would waken
Of the dream your soul was not forsaken:
In the room where the dormer windows look—
There were your knight and the tattered book.

With colors of the forest green
Gabled roofs and the demesne
Of faery kingdoms and faery time
Storied in pre-natal rhyme. . . .
Past the orchards, in the plain
The cattle fed on in the rain.
And the storm-beaten horseman sped
Rain blinded and with bended head.
And John the ploughman comes and goes
In labor wet, with steaming clothes.
This is your landscape, but you see
Not terror and not destiny
Behind its loved, maternal face,
Its power to change, or fade, replace
Its wonder with a deeper dream,
Unfolding to a vaster theme.
From time eternal was this earth?
No less this landscape with your birth
Arose, nor leaves you, nor decay
Finds till the twilight of your day.
It bore you, moulds you to its plan.
It ends with you as it began,
But bears the seed of future years
Of higher raptures, dumber tears.

* * * * *

For soon you lose the landscape through
Absence, sorrow, eyes grown true

To the naked limbs which show
Buds that never more may blow.
Now you know the lame were straight
Ere you knew them, and the fate
Of the old is yet to die.
Now you know the dead who lie
In the graves you saw where first
The landscape on your vision burst,
Were not always dead, and now
Shadows rest upon the brow
Of the souls as young as you.
Some are gone, though years are few
Since you roamed with them the hills.
So the landscape changes, wills
All the changes, did it try
Its promises to justify? . . .

* * * *

For you return and find it bare:
There is no heaven of golden air.
Your eyes around the horizon rove,
A clump of trees is Leese's Grove.
And what's the hedgerow, what's the pond?
A wallow where the vagabond
Beast will not drink, and where the arch
Of heaven in the days of March
Refrains to look. A blinding rain
Beats the once gilded window pane.

John, the poor wretch, is gone, but bread
Tempts other feet that path to tread
Between the barn and house, and brave
The March rain and the winds that rave. . . .
O, landscape I am one who stands
Returned with pale and broken hands
Glad for the day that I have known,
And finds the deserted doorway strown
With shoulder blade and spinal bone.
And you who nourished me and bred
I find the spirit from you fled.
You gave me dreams, 'twas at your breast
My soul's beginning rose and pressed
My steps afar at last and shaped
A world elusive, which escaped
Whatever love or thought could find
Beyond the tireless wings of mind.
Yet grown by you, and feeding on
Your strength as mother, you are gone
When I return from living, trace
My steps to see how I began,
And deeply search your mother face
To know your inner self, the place
For which you bore me, sent me forth
To wander, south or east or north. . . .
Now the familiar landscape lies
With breathless breast and hollow eyes.
It knows me not, as I know not

Its secret, spirit, all forgot
Its kindred look is, as I stand
A stranger in an unknown land.

* * * * *

Are we not earth-born, formed of dust
Which seeks again its love and trust
In an old landscape, after change
In hearts grown weary, wrecked and strange?
What though we struggled to emerge
Dividual, footed for the urge
Of further self-discoveries, though
In the mid-years we cease to know,
Through disenchanted eyes, the spell
That clothed it like a miracle—
Yet at the last our steps return
Its deeper mysteries to learn.
It has been always us, it must
Clasp to itself our kindred dust.
We cannot free ourselves from it.
Near or afar we must submit
To what is in us, what was grown
Out of the landscape's soil, the known
And unknown powers of soil and soul.
As bodies yield to the control
Of the earth's center, and so bend
In age, so hearts toward the end
Bend down with lips so long athirst

To waters which were known at first—
The little spring at Leese's Grove
Was your first love, is your last love!

* * * * *

When those we knew in youth have crept
Under the landscape, which has kept
Nothing we saw with youthful eyes;
Ere God is formed in the empty skies,
I wonder not our steps are pressed
Toward the mystery of their rest.
That is the hope at bud which kneels
Where ancestors the tomb conceals.
Age no less than youth would lean
Upon some love. For what is seen
No more of father, mother, friend,
For hands of flesh lost, eyes grown blind
In death, a something which assures,
Comforts, allays our fears, endures.
Just as the landscape and our home
In childhood made of heaven's dome,
And all the farthest ways of earth
A place as sheltered as the hearth.

* * * * *

Is it not written at the last day
Heaven and earth shall roll away?
Yes, as my landscape passed through death,

Lay like a corpse, and with new breath
Became instinct with fire and light—
So shall it roll up in my sight,
Pass from the realm of finite sense,
Become a thing of spirit, whence
I shall pass too, its child in faith
Of dreams it gave me, which nor death
Nor change can wreck, but still reveal
In change a Something vast, more real
Than sunsets, meadows, green-wood trees,
Or even faery presences.
A Something which the earth and air
Transmutes but keeps them what they were;
Clear films of beauty grown more thin
As we approach and enter in.
Until we reach the scene that made
Our landscape just a thing of shade.

* * * * *

TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

Well, then, another drink! Ben Jonson knows,
So do you, Michael Drayton, that to-morrow
I reach my fifty-second year. But hark ye,
To-morrow lacks two days of being a month—
Here is a secret—since I made my will.
Heigh ho! that's done too! I wonder why I did it?
That I should make a will! Yet it may be
That then and jump at this most crescent hour
Heaven inspired the deed.

As a mad younker
I knew an aged man in Warwickshire
Who used to say, "Ah, mercy me," for sadness
Of change, or passing time, or secret thoughts.
If it was spring he sighed it, if 'twas fall,
With drifting leaves, he looked upon the rain
And with doleful suspiration kept
This habit of his grief. And on a time
As he stood looking at the flying clouds,
I loitering near, expectant, heard him say it,
Inquired, "Why do you say 'Ah, mercy me,'
Now that it's April?" So he hobbled off
And left me empty there.

Now here am I!
Oh, it is strange to find myself this age,
And rustling like a peascod, though unshelled,
And, like this aged man of Warwickshire,
Slaved by a mood which must have breath—"Tra-la!"
That's what I say instead of "Ah, mercy me."
For look you, Ben, I catch myself with "Tra-la"
The moment I break sleep to see the day.
At work, alone, vexed, laughing, mad or glad
I say, "Tra-la" unknowing. Oft at table
I say, "Tra-la." And 'tother day, poor Anne
Looked long at me and said, "You say, 'Tra-la'
Sometimes when you're asleep; why do you so?"
Then I bethought me of that aged man
Who used to say, "Ah, mercy me," but answered:
"Perhaps I am so happy when awake
The song crops out in slumber—who can say?"
And Anne arose, began to keel the pot,
But was she answered, Ben? Who know a woman?

To-morrow is my birthday. If I die,
Slip out of this with Bacchus for a guide,
What soul would interdict the poppied way?
Heroes may look the Monster down, a child
Can wilt a lion, who is cowed to see
Such bland unreckoning of his strength—but I,
Having so greatly lived, would sink away

Unknowing my departure. I have died
A thousand times, and with a valiant soul
Have drunk the cup, but why? In such a death
To-morrow shines and there's a place to lean.
But in this death that has no bottom to it,
No bank beyond, no place to step, the soul
Grows sick, and like a falling dream we shrink
From that inane which gulfs us, without place
For us to stand and see it.

Yet, dear Ben,
This thing must be; that's what we live to know
Out of long dreaming, saying that we know it.
As yeasty heroes in their braggart teens
Spout learnedly of war, who never saw
A cannon aimed. You drink too much to-day,
Or get a scratch while turning Lucy's stile,
And like a beast you sicken. Like a beast
They cart you off. What matter if your thought
Outsoared the Phoenix? Like a beast you rot.
Methinks that something wants our flesh, as we
Hunger for flesh of beasts. But still to-morrow,
To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow
Creeps in this petty pace—O, Michael Drayton,
Some end must be. But 'twixt the fear of ceasing
And weariness of going on we lie
Upon these thorns!

These several springs I find
No new birth in the Spring. And yet in London
I used to cry, "O, would I were in Stratford;
It's April and the larks are singing now.
The flags are green along the Avon river;
O, would I were a rambler in the fields.
This poor machine is racing to its wreck.
This grist of thought is endless, this old sorrow
Sprouts, winds and crawls in London's darkness.
Come
Back to your landscape! Peradventure waits
Some woman there who will make new the earth,
And crown the spring with fire."

So back I come.
And the springs march before me, say, "Behold
Here are we, and what would you, can you use us?"
What good is air if lungs are out, or springs
When the mind's flown so far away no spring,
Nor loveliness of earth can call it back?
I tell you what it is: in early youth
The life is in the loins; by thirty years
It travels through the stomach to the lungs,
And then we strut and crow. By forty years
The fruit is swelling while the leaves are fresh.
By fifty years you're ripe, begin to rot.
At fifty-two, or fifty-five or sixty
The life is in the seed—what's spring to you?

Puff! Puff! You are so winged and light you fly.
For every passing zephyr, are blown off,
And drifting, God knows where, cry out "tra-la,"
"Ah, mercy me," as it may happen you.
Puff! Puff! away you go!

Another drink?
Why, you may drown the earth with ale and I
Will drain it like a sea. The more I drink
The better I see that this is April time. . . .

Ben! There is one Voice which says to everything:
"Dream what you will, I'll make you bear your seed.
And, having borne, the sickle comes among ye
And takes your stalk." The rich and sappy greens
Of spring or June show life within the loins,
And all the world is fair, for now the plant
Can drink the level cup of flame where heaven
Is poured full by the sun. But when the blossom
Flutters its colors, then it takes the cup
And waves the stalk aside. And having drunk
The stalk to penury, then slumber comes
With dreams of spring stored in the imprisoned
germ,
An old life and a new life all in one,
A thing of memory and of prophecy,
Of reminiscence, longing, hope and fear.
What has been ours is taken, what was ours

Becomes entailed on our seed in the spring,
Fees in possession and enjoyment too. . . .

The thing is sex, Ben. It is that which lives
And dies in us, makes April and unmakes,
And leaves a man like me at fifty-two,
Finished but living, on the pinnacle
Betwixt a death and birth, the earth consumed
And heaven rolled up to eyes whose troubled glances
Would shape again to something better—what?
Give me a woman, Ben, and I will pick
Out of this April, by this larger art
Of fifty-two, such songs as we have heard,
Both you and I, when weltering in the clouds
Of that eternity which comes in sleep,
Or in the viewless spinning of the soul
When most intense. The woman is somewhere,
And that's what tortures, when I think this field
So often gleaned could blossom once again
If I could find her.

Well, as to my plays:
I have not written out what I would write.
They have a thousand buds of finer flowering.
And over "Hamlet" hangs a teasing spirit
As fine to that as sense is fine to flesh.
Good friends, my soul beats up its prisoned wings
Against the ceiling of a vaster whorl

And would break through and enter. But, fair friends,
What strength in place of sex shall steady me?
What is the motive of this higher mount?
What process in the making of myself—
The very fire, as it were, of my growth—
Shall furnish forth these writings by the way,
As incident, expression of the nature
Relumed for adding branches, twigs and leaves? . . .

Suppose I'd make a tragedy of this,
Focus my fancied "Dante" to this theme,
And leave my halfwrit "Sappho," which at best
Is just another delving in the mine
That gave me "Cleopatra" and the Sonnets?
If you have genius, write my tragedy,
And call it "Shakespeare, Gentleman of Stratford,"
Who lost his soul amid a thousand souls,
And had to live without it, yet live with it
As wretched as the souls whose lives he lived.
Here is a play for you: Poor William Shakespeare,
This moment growing drunk, the famous author
Of certain sugared sonnets and some plays,
With this machine too much to him, which started
Some years ago, now cries him nay and runs
Even when the house shakes and complains, "I fall,
You shake me down, my timbers break apart.
Why, if an engine must go on like this
The building should be stronger."

Or to mix,
And by the mixing, unmix metaphors,
No mortal man has blood enough for brains
And stomach too, when the brain is never done
With thinking and creating.

For you see,
I pluck a flower, cut off a dragon's head—
Choose twixt these figures—lo, a dozen buds,
A dozen heads out-crop. For every fancy,
Play, sonnet, what you will, I write me out
With thinking "Now I'm done," a hundred others
Crowd up for voices, and, like twins unborn
Kick and turn o'er for entrance to the world.
And I, poor fecund creature, who would rest,
As 'twere from an importunate husband, fly
To money-lending, farming, mulberry trees,
Enclosing Welcombe fields, or idling hours
In common talk with people like the Combes.
All this to get a heartiness, a hold
On earth again, lest Heaven Hercules,
Finding me strayed to mid-air, kicking heels
Above the mountain tops, seize on my scruff
And bear me off or strangle.

Good, my friends,
The "Tempest" is as nothing to the voice
That calls me to performance—what I know not.

TO-MORROW IS MY BIRTHDAY

I've planned an epic of the Asian wash
Which slopped the star of Athens and put out,
Which should all history analyze, and present
A thousand notables in the guise of life,
And show the ancient world and worlds to come
To the last blade of thought and tiniest seed
Of growth to be. With visions such as these
My spirit turns in restless ecstacy,
And this enslavéd brain is master sponge,
And sucks the blood of body, hands and feet.
While my poor spirit, like a butterfly
Gummed in its shell, beats its bedraggled wings,
And cannot rise.

I'm cold, both hands and feet.
These three days past I have been cold, this hour
I am warm in three days. God bless the ale.
God did do well to give us anodynes. . . .
So now you know why I am much alone,
And cannot fellow with Augustine Phillips,
John Heminge, Richard Burbage, Henry Condell,
And do not have them here, dear ancient friends,
Who grieve, no doubt, and wonder for changed love.
Love is not love which alters when it finds
A change of heart, but mine has changed not, only
I cannot be my old self. I blaspheme:
I hunger for broiled fish, but fly the touch
Of hands of flesh.

I am most passionate,
And long am used perplexities of love
To bemoan and to bewail. And do you wonder,
Seeing what I am, what my fate has been?
Well, hark you; Anne is sixty now, and I,
A crater which erupts, look where she stands
In lava wrinkles, eight years older than I am,
As years go, but I am a youth afire
While she is lean and slippered. It's a Fury
Which takes me sometimes, makes my hands clutch out
For virgins in their teens. O sullen fancy!
I want them not, I want the love which springs
Like flame which blots the sun, where fuel of body
Is piled in reckless generosity. . . .
You are most learned, Ben, Greek and Latin know,
And think me nature's child, scarce understand
How much of physic, law, and ancient annals
I have stored up by means of studious zeal.
But pass this by, and for the braggart breath
Ensuing now say, "Will was in his cups,
Potvaliant, boozed, corned, squiffy, obfuscated,
Crapulous, inter pocula, or so forth.
Good sir, or so, or friend, or gentleman,
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country, on my honor, Shakespeare
At Stratford, on the twenty-second of April,
Year sixteen-sixteen of our Lord was merry—
Videlicet, was drunk." Well, where was I?—

Oh yes, at braggart breath, and now to say it:
I believe and say it as I would lightly speak
Of the most common thing to sense, outside
Myself to touch or analyze, this mind
Which has been used by Something, as I use
A quill for writing, never in this world
In the most high and palmy days of Greece,
Or in this roaring age, has known its peer.
No soul as mine has lived, felt, suffered, dreamed,
Broke open spirit secrets, followed trails
Of passions curious, countless lives explored
As I have done. And what are Greek and Latin,
The lore of Aristotle, Plato to this?
Since I know them by what I am, the essence
From which their utterance came, myself a flower
Of every graft and being in myself
The recapitulation and the complex
Of all the great. Were not brains before books?
And even geometrics in some brain
Before old Gutenberg? O fie, Ben Jonson,
If I am nature's child am I not all?
Howe'er it be, ascribe this to the ale,
And say that reason in me was a fume.
But if you honor me, as you have said,
As much as any, this side idolatry,
Think, Ben, of this: That I, whate'er I be
In your regard, have come to fifty-two,
Defeated in my love, who knew too well

That poets through the love of women turn
To satyrs or to gods, even as women
By the first touch of passion bloom or rot
As angels or as bawds.

Bethink you also
How I have felt, seen, known the mystic process
Working in man's soul from the woman soul
As part thereof in essence, spirit and flesh,
Even as a malady may be, while this thing
Is health and growth, and growing draws all life,
All goodness, wisdom for its nutriment.
Till it become a vision paradisic,
And a ladder of fire for climbing, from its topmost
Rung a place for stepping into heaven. . . .

This I have know, but had not. Nor have I
Stood coolly off and seen the woman, used
Her blood upon my palette. No, but heaven
Commanded my strength's use to abort and slay
What grew within me, while I saw the blood
Of love untimely ripped, as 'twere a child
Killed i' the womb, a harpy or an angel
With my own blood stained.

As a virgin shamed
By the swelling life unlicensed needles it,
But empties not her womb of some last shred
Of flesh which fouls the alleys of her body,

And fills her wholesome nerves with poisoned sleep,
And weakness to the last of life, so I
For some shame not unlike, some need of life
To rid me of this life I had conceived
Did up and choke it too, and thence begot
A fever and a fixed debility
For killing that begot.

Now you see that I
Have not grown from a central dream, but grown
Despite a wound, and over the wound and used
My flesh to heal my flesh. My love's a fever
Which longed for that which nursed the malady,
And fed on that which still preserved the ill,
The uncertain, sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept
Has left me. And as reason is past care
I am past cure, with ever more unrest
Made frantic-mad, my thoughts as madmen's are,
And my discourse at random from the truth,
Not knowing what she is, who swore her fair
And thought her bright, who is as black as hell
And dark as night.

But list, good gentlemen,
This love I speak of is not as a cloak
Which one may put away to wear a coat,
And doff that for a jacket, like the loves

We men are wont to have as loves or wives.
She is the very one, the soul of souls,
And when you put her on you put on light,
Or wear the robe of Nessus, poisonous fire,
Which if you tear away you tear your life,
And if you wear you fall to ashes. So
'Tis not her bed-vow broke, I have broke mine,
That ruins me; 'tis honest faith quite lost,
And broken hope that we could find each other,
And that mean more to me and less to her.
'Tis that she could take all of me and leave me
Without a sense of loss, without a tear,
And make me fool and perjured for the oath
That swore her fair and true. I feel myself
As like a virgin who her body gives
For love of one whose love she dreams is hers,
But wakes to find herself a toy of blood,
And dupe of prodigal breath, abandoned quite
For other conquests. For I gave myself,
And shrink for thought thereof, and for the loss
Of myself never to myself restored.
The urtication of this shame made plays
And sonnets, as you'll find behind all deeds
That mount to greatness, anger, hate, disgust,
But, better, love.

To hell with punks and wenches,
Drabs, mopsies, doxies, minxes, trulls and queans,

Rips, harridans and strumpets, pieces, jades.
And likewise to the eternal bonfire lechers,
All rakehells, satyrs, goats and placket fumblers,
Gibs, breakers-in-at-catch-doors, thunder tubes.
I think I have a fever—hell and furies!
Or else this ale grows hotter i' the mouth.
Ben, if I die before you, let me waste
Richly and freely in the good brown earth,
Untrumpeted and by no bust marked out.
What good, Ben Jonson, if the world could see
What face was mine, who wrote these plays and sonnets?
Life, you have hurt me. Since Death has a veil
I take the veil and hide, and like great Cæsar
Who drew his toga round him, I depart.

Good friends, let's to the fields—I have a fever.
After a little walk, and by your pardon,
I think I'll sleep. There is no sweeter thing,
Nor fate more blessed than to sleep. Here, world,
I pass you like an orange to a child:
I can no more with you. Do what you will.
What should my care be when I have no power
To save, guide, mould you? Naughty world you need me
As little as I need you: go your way!
Tyrants shall rise and slaughter fill the earth,
But I shall sleep. In wars and wars and wars

The ever-replenished youth of earth shall shriek
And clap their gushing wounds—but I shall sleep,
Nor earthy thunder wake me when the cannon
Shall shake the throne of Tartarus. Orators
Shall fulmine over London or America
Of rights eternal, parchments, sacred charters
And cut each others' throats when reason fails—
But I shall sleep. This globe may last and breed
The race of men till Time cries out "How long?"
But I shall sleep ten thousand thousand years.
I am a dream, Ben, out of a blessed sleep—
Let's walk and hear the lark.

* * * * *

SWEET CLOVER

Only a few plants up—and not a blossom
My clover didn't catch. What is the matter?
Old John comes by. I show him my result.
Look, John! My clover patch is just a failure,
I wanted you to sow it. Now you see
What comes of letting Hunter do your work.
The ground was not plowed right, or disced perhaps,
Or harrowed fine enough, or too little seed
Was sown.

But John, who knows a clover field,
Pulls up a plant and cleans the roots of soil
And studies them.

He says, Look at the roots!
Hunter neglected to inoculate
The seed, for clover seed must always have
Clover bacteria to make it grow,
And blossom. In a thrifty field of clover
The roots are studded thick with tubercles,
Like little warts, made by bacteria.
And somehow these bacteria lay hold
Upon the nitrogen that fills the soil,
And make the plants grow, make them blossom too.

When Hunter sowed this field he was not well:
He should have hauled some top-soil to this field
From some old clover field, or made a culture
Of these bacteria and soaked the seed
In it before he sowed it.

As I said,
Hunter was sick when he was working here.
And then he ran away to Indiana
And left his wife and children. Now he's back.
His cough was just as bad in Indiana
As it is here. A cough is pretty hard
To run away from. Wife and children too
Are pretty hard to leave, since thought of them
Stays with a fellow and cannot be left.
Yes, Hunter's back, but he can't work for you.
He's straightening out his little farm and making
Provision for his family. Hunter's changed.
He is a better man. It almost seems
That Hunter's blossomed. . . .

I am sorry for him.
The doctor says he has tuberculosis.

SOMETHING BEYOND THE HILL

To a western breeze
A row of golden tulips is nodding.
They flutter their golden wings
In a sudden ecstacy and say:
Something comes to us from beyond,
Out of the sky, beyond the hill
We give it to you.

* * * * *

And I walk through rows of jonquils
To a beloved door,
Which you open.
And you stand with the priceless gold of your tulip head
Nodding to me, and saying:
Something comes to me
Out of the mystery of Eternal Beauty—
I give it to you.

* * * * *

There is the morning wonder of hyacinth in your eyes,
And the freshness of June iris in your hands,
And the rapture of gardenias in your bosom.
But your voice is the voice of the robin
Singing at dawn amid new leaves.

It is like sun-light on blue water
Where the south-wind is on the water
And the buds of the flags are green.
It is like the wild bird of the sedges
With fluttering wings on a wind-blown reed
Showering lyrics over the sun-light
Between rhythmical pauses
When his heart has stopped,
Making light and water
Into song.

* * * * *

Let me hear your voice,
And the voice of Eternal Beauty
Through the music of your voice.
Let me gather the iris of your hands.
Against my face.
And close my eyes with your eyes.
Let me listen with you
For the Voice.

* * * * *

FRONT THE AGES WITH A SMILE

How did the sculptor, Voltaire, keep you quiet and posed
In an arm chair, just think, at your busiest age we are told,
Being better than seventy? How did he manage to stay you
From hopping through Europe for long enough time for his work,
Which shows you in marble, the look and the smile and the nose,
The filleted brow very bald, the thin little hands,
The posture pontifical, face imperturbable, smile so serene.
How did the sculptor detain you, you ever so restless,
You ever so driven by princes and priests? So I stand here
Enwrapped of this face of you, frail little frame of you,
And think of your work—how nothing could balk you
Or quench you or damp you. How you twisted and turned,
Emerged from the fingers of malice, emerged with a laugh,
Kept Europe in laughter, in turmoil, in fear
For your eighty-four years!

And they say of you still
You were light and a mocker! You should have been solemn,
And argued with monkeys and swine, speaking truthfully always.
Nay, truthful with whom, to what end? With a breed such as lived
In your day and your place? It was never their due!
Truth for the truthful and true, and a lie for the liar if need be—
A board out of plumb for a place out of plumb, for the hypocrite flashes
Of lightning or rods red hot for thrusting in tortuous places.
Well, this was your way, you lived out the genius God gave you.
And they hated you for it, hunted you all over Europe—
Why should they not hate you? Why should you not follow your light?
But wherever they drove you, you climbed to a place more satiric.
Did France bar her door? Geneva remained—good enough!
Les Delices close to some several cantons, you know.
Would they lay hands upon you? I fancy you laughing,
You stand at your door and step into Vaud by one path;
You stand at your door and step by another to France—

Such safe jurisdictions, in truth, as the Illinois rowdies
Step from county to county ahead of the frustrate
policeman.
And here you have printers to print what you write and
a house
For the acting of plays, La Pucelle, Orphelin.
O busy Voltaire, never resting. . . .

So England conservative, England of Southey and
Burke,
The fox-hunting squires, the England of Church and of
State,
The England half mule and half ox, writes you down,
O Voltaire:
The quack grass of popery flourished in France, you
essayed
To plow up the tangle, and harrow the roots from the soil.
It took a good ploughman to plow it, a ploughman of
laughter,
A ploughman who laughed when the plow struck the
roots, and your breast
Was thrown on the handles.

And yet to this day, O Voltaire,
They charge you with levity, scoffing, when all that you
did
Was to plough up the quack grass, and turn up the
roots to the sun,

And let the sun kill them. For laughter is sun-light,
And nothing of worth or of truth needs to fear it.

But listen
The strength of a nation is mind, I will grant you, and still
But give it a tongue read and spoken more greatly than others,
That nation can judge true or false and the judgment abides.
The judgment in English condemns you, where is there a judgment
To save you from this? Is it German, or Russian, or French?

Did you give up three years of your life
To wipe out the sentence that burned the wracked body of Calas?
Did you help the oppressed Montbailli and Lally, O well,
Six lines in an article written in English are plenty
To weigh what you did, put it by with a generous gesture,
Give the minds of the student your measure, impress them
Forever that all of this sacrifice, service was noble,
But done with mixed motives, the fruits of your meddlesome nature,

Your hatred of churches and priests. Six lines are the record
Of all of these years of hard plowing in quack-grass, while batting
At poisonous flies and stepping on poisonous snakes. . .

How well did you know that life to a genius, a god,
Is naught but a farce! How well did you look with those eyes
As black as a beetle's through all the ridiculous show;
Ridiculous war, and ridiculous strife, and ridiculous pomp.
Ridiculous dignity, riches, rituals, reasons and creeds.
Ridiculous guesses at what the great Silence is saying.
Ridiculous systems wound over the earth like a snake
Devouring the children of Fear! Ridiculous customs,
Ridiculous judgments and laws, philosophies, worships.
You saw through and laughed at—you saw above all
That a soul must make end with a groan, or a curse, or a laugh.

So you smiled till the lines of your mouth
A crescent became with dimples for horns, so expressing
To centuries after who see you in marble: Behold me,
I lived, I loved, I laughed, I toiled without ceasing
Through eighty-four years for realities—O let them pass,
Let life go by. Would you rise over death like a god?
Front the ages with a smile!

* * * * *

POOR PIERROT

Here far away from the city, here by the yellow dunes
I will lie and soothe my heart where the sea croons.
For what can I do with strife, or what can I do with hate?
Or the city, or life, or fame, or love or fate?

Or the struggle since time began of the rich and poor?
Or the law that drives the weak from the temple's door?
Bury me under the sand so that my sorrow shall lie
Hidden under the dunes from the world's eye.

I have learned the secret of silence, silence long and deep:
The dead knew all that I know, that is why they sleep.
They could do nothing with fate, or love, or fame, or strife—
When life fills full the soul then life kills life.

I would glide under the earth as a shadow over a dune,
Into the soul of silence, under the sun and moon.
And forever as long as the world stands or the stars flee
Be one with the sands of the shore and one with the sea.

* * * * *

MIRAGE OF THE DESERT

Well, there's the brazier set by the temple door:
Blue flames run over the coals and flicker through.
There are cool spaces of sky between white clouds—
But what are flames and spaces but eyes of blue?

* * * * *

And there's the harp on which great fingers play
Of gods who touch the wires, dreaming infinite things:
And there's a soul that wanders out when called
By a voice afar from the answering strings.

* * * * *

And there's the wish of the deep fulfillment of tears,
Till the vision, the mad music are wept away.
One cannot have them and live, but if one die
It might be better than living—who can say?

* * * * *

Why do we thirst for urns beyond urns who know
How sweet they are, yet bitter, not enough?
Eternity will quench your thirst, O soul—
But never the Desert's spectre, cup of love!

* * * * *

DAHLIAS

The mad wind is the warden,
And the smiling dahlias nod
To the dahlias across the garden,
And the wastes of the golden rod.

They never pray for pardon,
Nor ask his way nor forego,
Nor close their hearts nor harden
Nor stay his hand, nor bestow

Their hearts filched out of their bosoms,
Nor plan for dahlias to be.
For the wind blows over the garden
And sets the dahlias free.

They drift to the song of the warden,
Heedless they give him heed.
And he walks and blows through the garden
Blossom and leaf and seed.

* * * * *

THE GRAND RIVER MARSHES

Silvers and purples breathing in a sky
Of fiery mid-days, like a watching tiger,
Of the restrained but passionate July
Upon the marshes of the river lie,
Like the filmed pinions of the dragon fly.

* * * * *

A whole horizon's waste of rushes bend
Under the flapping of the breeze's wing,
Departing and revisiting
The haunts of the river twisting without end.

* * * * *

The torsions of the river make long miles
Of the waters of the river which remain
Coiled by the village, tortuous aisles
Of water between the rushes, which restrain
The bewildered currents in returning files,
Twisting between the greens like a blue racer,
Too hurt to leap with body or uplift
Its head while gliding, neither slow nor swift

* * * * *

Against the shaggy yellows of the dunes
The iron bridge's reticules
Are seen by fishermen from the Damascened
lagoons.
But from the bridge, watching the little steamer
Paddling against the current up to Eastmanville,
The river loosened from the abandoned spools
Of earth and heaven wanders without will,
Between the rushes, like a silken streamer.
And two old men who turn the bridge
For passing boats sit in the sun all day,
Toothless and sleepy, ancient river dogs,
And smoke and talk of a glory passed away.
And of the ruthless sacrilege
Which mowed away the pines,
And cast them in the current here as logs,
To be devoured by the mills to the last sliver,
Making for a little hour heroes and heroines,
Dancing and laughter at Grand Haven,
When the great saws sent screeches up and whines,
And cries for more and more
Slaughter of forests up and down the river
And along the lake's shore.

* * * * *

But all is quiet on the river now
As when the snow lay windless in the wood,
And the last Indian stood

And looked to find the broken bough
That told the path under the snow.
All is as silent as the spiral lights
Of purple and of gold that from the marshes rise,
Like the wings of swarming dragon flies,
Far up toward Eastmanville, where the enclosing skies
Quiver with heat; as silent as the flights
Of the crow like smoke from shops against the glare
Of dunes and purple air,
There where Grand Haven against the sand hill lies.

* * * * *

The forests and the mills are gone!
All is as silent as the voice I heard
On a summer dawn
When we two fished among the river reeds.
As silent as the pain
In a heart that feeds
A sorrow, but does not complain.
As silent as above the bridge in this July,
Noiseless, far up in this mirror-lighted sky
Wheels aimlessly a hydroplane:
A man-bestridden dragon fly!

* * * * *

DELILAH

Because thou wast most delicate,
A woman fair for men to see,
The earth did compass thy estate,
Thou didst hold life and death in fee,
And every soul did bend the knee.

Much pleasure also made thee grieve
For that the goblet had been drained.
The well spiced viand thou didst leave
To frown on want whose throat was strained,
And violence whose hands were stained.

(Wherein the corrupt spirit of privilege is symbolized by Delilah and the People by Samson.)

The purple of thy royal cloak,
Made the sea paler for its hue.
Much people bent beneath the yoke
To fetch thee jewels white and blue,
And rings to pass thy gold hair through.

Therefore, Delilah wast thou called,
Because the choice wines nourished thee
In Sorek, by the mountains walled
Against the north wind's misery,
Where flourished every pleasant tree.

Thy lovers also were as great
  In numbers as the sea sands were;
Thou didst requite their love with hate;
  And give them up to massacre,
  Who brought thee gifts of gold and myrrh.

(Delilah hath a taste for ease and luxury and wantoneth with divers lovers.)

At Gaza and at Ashkelon,
  The obscene Dagon worshipping,
Thy face was fair to look upon.
  Yet thy tongue, sweet to talk or sing,
  Was deadlier than the adder's sting.

(Delilah conceiveth the design of ensnaring Samson.)

Wherefore, thou saidst: "I will procure
  The strong man Samson for my spouse,
His death will make my ease secure.
  The god has heard this people's vows
  To recompense their injured house."

Thereafter, when the giant lay
  Supinely rolled against thy feet,
Him thou didst craftily betray,
  With amorous vexings, low and sweet,
  To tell thee that which was not meet.

(Delilah attempteth to discover the source of Samson's strength. Samson very neatly deceiveth her.)

And Samson spake to thee again;
  "With seven green withes I may be bound,
So shall I be as other men."

Whereat the lords the green withes found—
The same about his limbs were bound.

Then did the fish-god in thee cry:
"The Philistines be upon thee now."
But Samson broke the withes awry,
As when a keen fire toucheth tow;
So thou didst not the secret know.

But thou, being full of guile, didst plead:
"My lord, thou hast but mocked my love
With lies who gave thy saying heed;
Hast thou not vexed my heart enough,
To ease me all the pain thereof?"

Now, in the chamber with fresh hopes,
The liers in wait did list, and then
He said: "Go to, and get new ropes,
Wherewith thou shalt bind me again,
So shall I be as other men."

(Samson retaineth his intellect and the lustihood of his body and again misleadeth the subtle craft of Delilah.)

Then didst thou do as he had said,
Whereat the fish-god in thee cried,
"The Philistines be upon thy head,"
He shook his shoulders deep and wide,
And cast the ropes like thread aside.

Yet thou still fast to thy conceit,
Didst chide him softly then and say:

"Beforetime thou hast shown deceit,
And mocked my quest with idle play,
Thou canst not now my wish gainsay."

Then with the secret in his thought,
He said: "If thou wilt weave my hair,
The web withal, the deed is wrought;
Thou shalt have all my strength in snare,
And I as other men shall fare."

Seven locks of him thou tookest and wove
The web withal and fastened it,
And then the pin thy treason drove,
With laughter making all things fit,
As did beseem thy cunning wit.

Then the god Dagon speaking by
Thy delicate mouth made horrid din;
"Lo the Philistine lords are nigh"—
He woke ere thou couldst scarce begin,
And took away the web and pin.

(Delilah still pursueth her designs and Samson beginning to be somewhat wearied hinteth very close to his secret.)

Yet, saying not it doth suffice,
Thou in the chamber's secrecy,
Didst with thy artful words entice
Samson to give his heart to thee,
And tell thee where his strength might be.

Pleading, "How canst thou still aver,
I love thee, being yet unkind?
How is it thou dost minister
Unto my heart with treacherous mind,
Thou art but cruelly inclined."

From early morn to falling dusk,
At night upon the curtained bed,
Fragrant with spikenard and with musk,
For weariness he laid his head,
Whilst thou the insidious net didst spread.

(Samson being weakened by lust and overcome by Delilah's importunities and guile telleth her wherein his great strength consisteth.)

Nor wouldst not give him any rest,
But vexed with various words his soul,
Till death far more than life was blest,
Shot through and through with heavy dole,
He gave his strength to thy control.

Saying, "I am a Nazarite,
To God alway, nor hath there yet
Razor or shears done despite
To these my locks of coarsen jet,
Therefore my strength hath known no let."

"But, and if these be shaven close,
Whereas I once was strong as ten,
I may not meet my meanest foes

Among the hated Philistine,
I shall be weak like other men."

He turned to sleep, the spell was done,
Thou saidst "Come up this once, I trow
The secret of his strength is known;
Hereafter sweat shall bead his brow,
Bring up the silver thou didst vow."

(Samson having trusted Delilah turneth to sleep whereat her minions with force falleth upon him and depriveth him of his strength.)

They came, and sleeping on thy knees,
The giant of his locks was shorn.
And Dagon, being now at ease,
Cried like the harbinger of morn,
To see the giant's strength forlorn.

For he wist not the Lord was gone:—
"I will go as I went erewhile,"
He said, "and shake my mighty brawn."
Without the captains, file on file,
Did execute Delilah's guile.

At Gaza where the mockers pass,
Midst curses and unholy sound,
They fettered him with chains of brass,
Put out his eyes, and being bound
Within the prison house he ground.

(Sansculottism, as it seemeth, is overthrown.)

The heathen looking on did sing;
"Behold our god into our hand,

Hath brought him for our banqueting,
Who slew us and destroyed our land,
Against whom none of us could stand."

(Samson being no longer formidable and being deprived of his eyes is reduced to slavery and made the sport of the heathen.)

Now, therefore, when the festival
Waxed merrily, with one accord,
The lords and captains loud did call,
To bring him out whom they abhorred,
To make them sport who sat at board.

(After a time Samson prayeth for vengeance even though himself should perish thereby.)

And Samson made them sport and stood
Betwixt the pillars of the house,
Above with scornful hardihood,
Both men and women made carouse,
And ridiculed his eyeless brows.

Then Samson prayed "Remember me
O Lord, this once, if not again.
O God, behold my misery,
Now weaker than all other men,
Who once was mightier than ten."

"Grant vengeance for these sightless eyes,
And for this unrequited toil,
For fraud, injustice, perjuries,
For lords whose greed devours the soil,
And kings and rulers who despoil."

"For all that maketh light of Thee,
  And sets at naught Thy holy word,
For tongues that babble blasphemy,
  And impious hands that hold the sword—
  Grant vengeance, though I perish, Lord."

(Wherein by a very nice conceit revolution is symbolized.)

He grasped the pillars, having prayed,
  And bowed himself—the building fell,
And on three thousand souls was laid,
  Gone soon to death with mighty yell.
  And Samson died, for it was well.

The lords and captains greatly err,
  Thinking that Samson is no more,
Blind, but with ever-growing hair,
  He grinds from Tyre to Singapore,
  While yet Delilah plays the whore.

So it hath been, and yet will be,
  The captains, drunken at the feast
To garnish their felicity,
  Will taunt him as a captive beast,
  Until their insolence hath ceased.

(Wherein it is shown that while the people like Samson have been blinded, and have not recovered their sight still that their hair continueth to grow.)

Of ribaldry that smelleth sweet,
  To Dagon and to Ashtoreth;
Of bloody stripes from head to feet,
  He will endure unto the death,
  Being blind, he also nothing saith.

Then 'gainst the Doric capitals,
  Resting in prayer to God for power,
He will shake down your marble walls,
  Abiding heaven's appointed hour,
  And those that fly shall hide and cower.

But this Delilah shall survive,
  To do the sin already done,
Her treacherous wiles and arts shall thrive,
  At Gaza and at Ashkelon,
  A woman fair to look upon.

THE WORLD-SAVER

If the grim Fates, to stave ennui,
  Play whips for fun, or snares for game,
The liar full of ease goes free,
  And Socrates must bear the shame.

With the blunt sage he stands despised,
  The Pharisees salute him not;
    Laughter awaits the truth he prized,
  And Judas profits by his plot.

A million angels kneel and pray,
  And sue for grace that he may win—
Eternal Jove prepares the day,
  And sternly sets the fateful gin.

Satan, who hates the light, is fain,
  To back his virtuous enterprise;
The omnipotent powers alone refrain,
  Only the Lord of hosts denies.

Whate'er of woven argument,
  Lacks warp to hold the woof in place,
Smothers his honest discontent,
  But leaves to view his woeful face.

TOWARD THE GULF

Fling forth the flag, devour the land,
  Grasp destiny and use the law;
But dodge the epigram's keen brand,
  And fall not by the ass's jaw.

The idiot snicker strikes more down,
  Than fell at Troy or Waterloo;
Still, still he meets it with a frown,
  And argues loudly for "the True."

Injustice lengthens out her chain,
  Greed, yet ahungered, calls for more;
But while the eons wax and wane,
  He storms the barricaded door.

Wisdom and peace and fair intent,
  Are tedious as a tale twice told;
One thing increases being spent—
  Perennial youth belongs to gold.

At Weehawken the soul set free,
  Rules the high realm of Bunker Hill,
Drink life from that philosophy,
  And flourish by the age's will.

If he shall toil to clear the field,
  Fate's children seize the prosperous year;
Boldly he fashions some new shield,
  And naked feels the victor's spear.

THE WORLD-SAVER

He rolls the world up into day,
  He finds the grain, and gets the hull.
He sees his own mind in the sway,
  And Progress tiptoes on his skull.

Angels and fiends behold the wrong,
  And execrate his losing fight;
While Jove amidst the choral song
  Smiles, and the heavens glow with light!

—*Trueblood*

Trueblood is bewitched to write a drama—
Only one drama, then to die. Enough
To win the heights but once! He writes me letters,
These later days marked "Opened by the Censor,"
About his drama, asks me what I think
About this point of view, and that approach,
And whether to etch in his hero's soul
By etching in his hero's enemies,
Or luminate his hero by enshadowing
His hero's enemies. How shall I tell him
Which is the actual and the larger theme,
His hero or his hero's enemies?
And through it all I see that Trueblood's mind
Runs to the under-dog, the fallen Titan
The god misunderstood, the lover of man
Destroyed by heaven for his love of man.

In July, 1914, while in London
He took me to his house to dine and showed me
The verses as above. And while I read
He left the room, returned, I heard him move
The ash trays on the table where we sat
And set some object on the table.

Then
As I looked up from reading I discovered
A skull and bony hand upon the table.
And Trueblood said: "Look at the loft brow!
And what a hand was this! A right hand too.
Those fingers in the flesh did miracles.
And when I have my hero's skull before me,
His hand that moulded peoples, I should write
The drama that possesses all my thought.
You'd think the spirit of the man would come
And show me how to find the key that fits
The story of his life, reveal its secret.
I know the secrets, but I want the secret.
You'd think his spirit out of gratitude
Would start me off. It's something, I insist,
To find a haven with a dramatist
After your bones have crossed the sea, and after
Passing from hand to hand they reach seclusion,
And reverent housing.

Dying in New York
He lay for ten years in a lonely grave

Somewhere along the Hudson, I believe.
No grave yard in the city would receive him.
Neither a banker nor a friend of banks,
Nor falling in a duel to awake
Indignant sorrow, space in Trinity
Was not so much as offered. He was poor,
And never had a tomb like Washington.
Of course he wasn't Washington—but still,
Study that skull a little! In ten years
A mad admirer living here in England
Went to America and dug him up,
And brought his bones to Liverpool. Just then
Our country was in turmoil over France—
(The details are so rich I lose my head,
And can't construct my acts.)—hell's flaming here,
And we are fighting back the roaring fire
That France had lighted. England would abort
The era she embraced. Here is a point
That vexes me in laying out the scenes,
And persons of the play. For parliament
Went into fury that these bones were here
On British soil. The city raged. They took
The poor town-crier, gave him nine months' prison
For crying on the streets the bones' arrival.
I'd like to put that crier in my play.
The scene of his arrest would thrill, in case
I put it on a background understood,
And showing why the fellow was arrested,

And what a high offence to heaven it was.
Then here's another thing: The monument
This zealous friend had planned was never raised.
The city wouldn't have it—you can guess
The brain that filled this skull and moved this hand
Had given England trouble. Yes, believe me!
He roused rebellion and he scattered pamphlets.
He had the English gift of writing pamphlets.
He stirred up peoples with his English gift
Against the mother country. How to show this
In action, not in talk, is difficult.

Well, then here is our friend who has these bones
And cannot honor them in burial.
And so he keeps them, then becomes a bankrupt.
And look! the bones pass to our friend's receiver.
Are they an asset? Our Lord Chancellor
Does not regard them so. I'd like to work
Some humor in my drama at this point,
And satirize his lordship just a little.
Though you can scarcely call a skull an asset
If it be of a man who helped to cost you
The loss of half the world. So the receiver
Cast out the bones and for a time a laborer
Took care of them. He sold them to a man
Who dealt in furniture. The empty coffin
About this time turned up in Guilford—then
It's 1854, the man is dead

Near forty years, when just the skull and hand
Are owned by Rev. Ainslie, who evades
All questions touching on that ownership,
And where the ribs, spine, arms and thigh bones are—
The rest in short.

And as for me—no matter
Who sold them, gave them to me, loaned them to me.
Behold the good right hand, behold the skull
Of *Thomas Paine*, theo-philanthropist,
Of Quaker parents, born in England! Look,
That is the hand that wrote the Crisis, wrote
The Age of Reason, Common Sense, and rallied
Americans against the mother country,
With just that English gift of pamphleteering.
You see I'd have to bring George Washington,
And James Monroe and Thomas Jefferson
Upon the stage, and put into their mouths
The eulogies they spoke on Thomas Paine,
To get before the audience that they thought
He did as much as any man to win
Your independence; that your Declaration
Was founded on his writings, even inspired
A clause against your negro slavery—how—
Look at this hand!—he was the first to write
United States of America—there's the hand
That was the first to write those words. Good Lord
This drama would out-last a Chinese drama

If I put all the story in. But tell me
What to omit, and what to stress?

And still
I'd have the greatest drama in the world
If I could prove he was dishonored, hunted,
Neglected, libeled, buried like a beast,
His bones dug up, thrown in and out of Chancery.
And show these horrors overtook Tom Paine
Because he was too great, and by this showing
Instruct the world to honor its torch bearers
For time to come. No? Well, that can't be done—
I know that; but it puzzles me to think
That Hamilton—we'll say, is so revered,
So lauded, toasted, all his papers studied
On tariffs and on banks, evoking ahs!
Great genius! and so forth—and there's the Crisis
And Common Sense which only little Shelleys
Haunting the dusty book shops read at all.
It wasn't that he liked his rum and drank
Too much at times, or chased a pretty skirt—
For Hamilton did that. Paine never mixed
In money matters to another's wrong
For his sake or a system's. Yes, I know
The world cares more for chastity and temperance
Than for a faultless life in money matters.
No use to dramatize that vital contrast,
The world to-day is what it always was.

But you don't call this Hamilton an artist
And Paine a mere logician and a wrangler?
Your artist soul gets limed in this mad world
As much as any. There is Leonardo—
The point's not here.

I think it's more like this:
Some men are Titans and some men are gods,
And some are gods who fall while climbing back
Up to Olympus whence they came. And some
While fighting for the race fall into holes
Where to return and rescue them is death.
Why look you here! You'd think America
Had gone to war to cheat the guillotine
Of Thomas Paine, in fiery gratitude.
He's there in France's national assembly,
And votes to save King Louis with this phrase:
Don't kill the man but kill the kingly office.
They think him faithless to the revolution
For words like these—and clap! the prison door
Shuts on our Thomas. So he writes a letter
To president—of what!—to Washington
President of the United States of America,
A title which Paine coined in seventy-seven
Now lettered on a monstrous seal of state!
And Washington is silent, never answers,
And leaves our Thomas shivering in a cell,
Who hears the guillotine go slash and click!

Perhaps this is the nucleus of my drama.
Or else to show that Washington was wise
Respecting England's hatred of our Thomas,
And wise to lift no finger to save Thomas,
Incurring England's wrath, who hated Thomas
For pamphlets like the "Crisis" "Common Sense."
That may be just the story for my drama.
Old Homer satirized the human race
For warring for the rescue of a Cyprian.
But there's not stuff for satire in a war
Ensuing on the insult for the rescue
Of nothing but a fellow who wrote pamphlets,
And won a continent for the rescuer.
That's tragedy, the more so if the fellow
Likes rum and writes that Jesus was a man.
This crushing of poor Thomas in the hate
Of England and her power, America's
Great fear and lowered strength might make a drama
As showing how the more you do in life
The greater shall you suffer. This is true,
If what you battered down gets hold of you.
This drama almost drives me mad at times.
I have his story at my fingers' ends.
But it won't take a shape. It flies my hands.
I think I'll have to give it up. What's that?
Well, if an audience of to-day would turn
From seeing Thomas Paine upon the stage
What is the use to write it, if they'd turn

No matter how you wrote it? I believe
They wouldn't like it in America,
Nor England either, maybe—you are right!
A drama with no audience is a failure.
But here's this skull. What shall I do with it?
If I should have it cased in solid silver
There is no shrine to take it—no Cologne
For skulls like this.

Well, I must die sometime,
And who will get it then? Look at this skull!
This bony hand! Then look at me, my friend:
A man who has a theme the world despises!

RECESSIONAL

In Time of War

MEDICAL UNIT—

Even as I see, and share with you in seeing,
The altar flame of your love's sacrifice;
And even as I bear before the hour the vision,
Your little hands in hospital and prison
Laid upon broken bodies, dying eyes,
So do I suffer for splendor of your being
Which leads you from me, and in separation
Lays on my breast the pain of memory.
Over your hands I bend
In silent adoration,
Dumb for a fear of sorrow without end,
Asking for consolation
Out of the sacrament of our separation,
And for some faithful word acceptable and true,
That I may know and keep the mystery:
That in this separation I go forth with you
And you to the world's end remain with me.

* * * * *

RECESSIONAL

How may I justify the hope that rises
That I am giving you to a world of pain,
And am a part of your love's sacrifices?
Is it so little if I see you not again?
You will croon soldier lads to sleep,
Even to the last sleep of all.
But in this absence, as your love will keep
Your breast for me for comfort, if I fall,
So I, though far away, shall kneel by you
If the last hour approaches, to bedew
Your lips that from their infant wondering
Lisped of a heaven lost.
I shall kiss down your eyes, and count the cost
As mine, who gave you, by the tragic giving.
Go forth with spirit to death, and to the living
Bearing a solace in death.
God has breathed on you His transfiguring breath,—
You are transfiguréd
Before me, and I bow my head,
And leave you in the light that lights your way,
And shadows me. Even now the hour is sped,
And the hour we must obey—
Look you, I will go pray!

* * * * *

THE AWAKENING

When you lie sleeping; golden hair
Tossed on your pillow, sea shell pink
Ears that nestle, I forbear
A moment while I look and think
How you are mine, and if I dare
To bend and kiss you lying there.

* * * * *

A Raphael in the flesh! Resist
I cannot, though to break your sleep
Is thoughtless of me—you are kissed
And roused from slumber dreamless, deep—
You rub away the slumber's mist,
You scold and almost weep.

* * * * *

It is too bad to wake you so,
Just for a kiss. But when awake
You sing and dance, nor seem to know
You slept a sleep too deep to break
From which I roused you long ago
For nothing but my passion's sake—
What though your heart should ache!

* * * * *

IN THE GARDEN AT THE DAWN HOUR

I arise in the silence of the dawn hour,
And softly steal out to the garden
Under the Favrile goblet of the dawning.
And a wind moves out of the south-land,
Like a film of silver,
And thrills with a far borne message
The flowers of the garden.
Poppies untie their scarlet hoods and wave them
To the south wind as he passes.
But the zinnias and calendulas,
In a mood of calm reserve, nod faintly
As the south wind whispers the secret
Of the dawn hour!

* * * * *

I stand in the silence of the dawn hour
In the garden,
As the star of morning fades.
Flying from scythes of air
The hare-bells, purples and golden glow
On the sand-hill back of the orchard
Race before the feet of the wind.
But clusters of oak-leaves over the yellow sand rim
Begin to flutter and glisten.

And in a moment, in a twinkled passion,
The blazing rapiers of the sun are flashed,
As he fences the lilac lights of the sky,
And drives them up where the ice of the melting moon
Is drowned in the waste of morning!

* * * * *

In the silence of the garden,
At the dawn hour
I turn and see you—
You who knew and followed,
You who knew the dawn hour,
And its sky like a Favrile goblet.
You who knew the south-wind
Bearing the secret of the morning
To waking gardens, fields and forests.
You in a gown of green, O footed Iris,
With eyes of dryad gray,
And the blown glory of unawakened tresses—
A phantom sprung out of the garden's enchantment,
In the silence of the dawn hour!

* * * * *

And here I behold you
Amid a trance of color, silent music,
The embodied spirit of the morning:
Wind from the south-land, flashing beams of the sun
Caught in the twinkling oak leaves:

IN THE GARDEN AT THE DAWN HOUR

Poppies who wave their untied hoods to the south wind;
And the imperious bows of zinnias and calendulas;
The star of morning drowned, and lights of lilac
Turned white for the woe of the moon;
And the silence of the dawn hour!

* * * * *

And there to take you in my arms and feel you
In the glory of the dawn hour,
Along the sinuous rhythm of flesh and flesh!
To know your spirit by that oneness
Of living and of love, in the twinkled passion
Of life re-lit and visioned.
In dryad eyes beholding
The dancing, leaping, touching hands and racing
Rapturous moment of the arisen sun;
And the first drop of day out of this cup of Favrile.
There to behold you,
Our spirits lost together
In the silence of the dawn hour!

* * * * *

FRANCE

France fallen! France arisen! France of the brave!
France of lost hopes! France of Promethean zeal!
Napoleon's France, that bruised the despot's heel
Of Europe, while the feudal world did rave.
Thou France that didst burst through the rock-bound
grave
Which Germany and England joined to seal,
And undismayed didst seek the human weal,
Through which thou couldst thyself and others save—
The wreath of amaranth and eternal praise!
When every hand was 'gainst thee, so was ours.
Freedom remembers, and I can forget:—
Great are we by the faith our past betrays,
And noble now the great Republic flowers
Incarnate with the soul of Lafayette.

* * * * *

BERTRAND AND GOURGAUD TALK OVER OLD TIMES

Gourgaud, these tears are tears—but look, this laugh,
How hearty and serene—you see a laugh
Which settles to a smile of lips and eyes
Makes tears just drops of water on the leaves
When rain falls from a sun-lit sky, my friend,
Drink to me, clasp my hand, embrace me, call me
Belovéd Bertrand. Ha! I sigh for joy.
Look at our Paris, happy, whole, renewed,
Refreshed by youth, new dressed in human leaves,
Shaking its fresh blown blossoms to the world.
And here we sit grown old, of memories
Top-full—your hand—my breast is all afire
With happiness that warms, makes young again.

You see it is not what we saw to-day
That makes me spirit, rids me of the flesh:—
But all that I remember, we remember
Of what the world was, what it is to-day,
Beholding how it grows. Gourgaud, I see
Not in the rise of this man or of that,
Nor in a battle's issue, in the blow
That lifts or fells a nation—no, my friend,
God is not there, but in the living stream

Which sweeps in spite of eddies, undertows,
Cross-currents, what you will, to that result
Where stillness shows the star that fits the star
Of truth in spirits treasured, imaged, kept
Through sorrow, blood and death,—God moves in that
And there I find Him.

But these tears—for whom
Or what are tears? The Old Guard—oh, my friend
That melancholy remnant! And the horse,
White, to be sure, but not Marengo, wearing
The saddle and the bridle which he used.
My tears take quality for these pitiful things,
But other quality for the purple robe
Over the coffin lettered in pure gold
"Napoleon"—ah, the emperor at last
Come back to Paris! And his spirit looks
Over the land he loved, with what result?
Does just the army that acclaimed him rise
Which rose to hail him back from Elba?—no
All France acclaims him! Princes of the church,
And notables uncover! At the door
A herald cries "The Emperor!" Those assembled
Rise and do reverence to him. Look at Soult,
He hands the king the sword of Austerlitz,
The king turns to me, hands the sword to me,
I place it on the coffin—dear Gourgaud,
Embrace me, clasp my hand! I weep and laugh

For thinking that the Emperor is home;
For thinking I have laid upon his bed
The sword that makes inviolable his bed,
Since History stepped to where I stood and stands
To say forever: Here he rests, be still,
Bow down, pass by in reverence—the Ages
Like giant caryatides that look
With sleepless eyes upon the world and hold
With never tiring hands the Vault of Time,
Command your reverence.

What have we seen?
Why this, that every man, himself achieving
Exhausts the life that drives him to the work
Of self-expression, of the vision in him,
His reason for existence, as he sees it.
He may or may not mould the epic stuff
As he would wish, as lookers on have hope
His hands shall mould it, and by failing take—
For slip of hand, tough clay or blinking eye,
A cinder for that moment in the eye—
A world of blame; for hooting or dispraise
Have all his work misvalued for the time,
And pump his heart up harder to subdue
Envy, or fear or greed, in any case
He grows and leaves and blossoms, so consumes
His soul's endowment in the vision of life.
And thus of him. Why, there at Fontainebleau

He is a man full spent, he idles, sleeps,
Hears with dull ears: Down with the Corsican,
Up with the Bourbon lilies! Royalists,
Conspirators, and clericals may shout
Their hatred of him, but he sits for hours
Kicking the gravel with his little heel,
Which lately trampled sceptres in the mud.
Well, what was he at Waterloo?—you know:
That piercing spirit which at mid-day power
Knew all the maps of Europe—could unfold
A map and say here is the place, the way,
The road, the valley, hill, destroy them here.
Why, all his memory of maps was blurred
The night before he failed at Waterloo.
The Emperor was sick, my friend, we know it.
He could not ride a horse at Waterloo.
His soul was spent, that's all. But who was rested?
The dirty Bourbons skulking back to Paris,
Now that our giant democrat was sick.
Oh, yes, the dirty Bourbons skulked to Paris
Helped by the Duke and Blücher, damn their souls.

What is a man to do whose work is done
And does not feel so well, has cancer, say?
You know he could have reached America
After his fall at Waterloo. Good God!
If only he had done it! For they say
New Orleans is a city good to live in.

And he had ceded to America
Louisiana, which in time would curb
The English lion. But he didn't go there.
His mind was weakened else he had foreseen
The lion he had tangled, wounded, scourged
Would claw him if it got him, play with him
Before it killed him. Who was England then?—

An old, mad, blind, despised and dying king
Who lost a continent for the lust that slew
The Emperor—the world will say at last
It was no other. Who was England then?
A regent bad as husband, father, son,
Monarch and friend. But who was England then?
Great Castlereagh who cut his throat, but who
Had cut his country's long before. The duke—
Since Waterloo, and since the Emperor slept—
The English stoned the duke, he bars his windows
With iron 'gainst the mobs who break to fury,
To see the Duke waylay democracy.
The world's great conqueror's conqueror!—Eh bien!
Grips England after Waterloo, but when
The people see the duke for what he is:
A blocker of reform, a Tory sentry,
A spotless knight of ancient privilege,
They up and stone him, by the very deed
Stone him for wronging the democracy
The Emperor erected with the sword.

The world's great conqueror's conqueror—Oh, I sicken!
Odes are like head-stones, standing while the graves
Are guarded and kept up, but falling down
To ruin and erasure when the graves
Are left to sink. Hey! there you English poets,
Picking from daily libels, slanders, junk
Of metal for your tablets 'gainst the Emperor,
Melt up true metal at your peril, poets,
Sweet moralists, monopolists of God.
But who was England? Byron driven out,
And courts of chancery vile but sacrosanct,
Despoiling Shelley of his children; Southey,
The turn-coat panegyrist of King George,
An old, mad, blind, despised, dead king at last;
A realm of rotten boroughs massed to stop
The progress of democracy and chanting
To God Almighty hymns for Waterloo,
Which did not stop democracy, as they hoped.
For England of to-day is freer—why?
The revolution and the Emperor!
They quench the revolution, send Napoleon
To St. Helena—but the ashes soar
Grown finer, grown invisible at last.
And all the time a wind is blowing ashes,
And sifting them upon the spotless linen
Of kings and dukes in England till at last
They find themselves mistaken for the people.
Drink to me, clasp my hand, embrace me—*tiens!*

The Emperor is home again in France,
And Europe for democracy is thrilling.
Now don't you see the Emperor was sick,
The shadows falling slant across his mind
To write to such an England: "My career
Is ended and I come to sit me down
Before the fireside of the British people,
And claim protection from your Royal Highness"—
This to the regent—" as a generous foe
Most constant and most powerful"—I weep.
They tricked him Gourgaud. Once upon the ship,
He thinks he's bound for England, and why not?
They dine him, treat him like an Emperor.
And then they tack and sail to St. Helena,
Give him a cow shed for a residence.
Depute that thing Sir Hudson Lowe to watch him,
Spy on his torture, intercept his letters,
Step on his broken wings, and mock the film
Descending on those eyes of failing fire. . . .

One day the packet brought to him a book
Inscribed by Hobhouse, "To the Emperor."
Lowe kept the book but when the Emperor learned
Lowe kept the book, because 'twas so inscribed,
The Emperor said—I stood near by—"Who gave you
The right to slur my title? In a few years
Yourself, Lord Castlereagh, the duke himself
Will be beneath oblivion's dust, remembered

For your indignities to me, that's all.
England expended millions on her libels
To poison Europe's mind and make my purpose
Obscure or bloody—how have they availed?
You have me here upon this scarp of rock,
But truth will pierce the clouds, 'tis like the sun
And like the sun it cannot be destroyed.
Your Wellingtons and Metternichs may dam
The liberal stream, but only to make stronger
The torrent when it breaks." Is it not true?
That's why I weep and laugh to-day, my friend
And trust God as I have not trusted yet.
And then the Emperor said: "What have I claimed?
A portion of the royal blood of Europe?
A crown for blood's sake? No, my royal blood
Is dated from the field of Montenotte,
And from my mother there in Corsica,
And from the revolution. I'm a man
Who made himself because the people made me.
You understand as little as she did
When I had brought her back from Austria,
And riding through the streets of Paris pointed
Up to the window of the little room
Where I had lodged when I came from Brienne,
A poor boy with my way to make—as poor
As Andrew Jackson in America,
No more a despot than he is a despot.
Your England understands. I was a menace

Not as a despot, but as head and front,
Eyes, brain and leader of democracy,
Which like the messenger of God was marking
The doors of kings for slaughter. England lies.
Your England understands I had to hold
By rule compact a people drunk with rapture,
And torn by counter forces, had to fight
The royalists of Europe who beheld
Their peoples feverish from the great infection,
Who hoped to stamp the plague in France and stop
Its spread to them. Your England understands.
Save Castlereagh and Wellington and Southey.
But look you, sir, my roads, canals and harbors,
My schools, finance, my code, the manufactures
Arts, sciences I builded, democratic
Triumphs which I won will live for ages—
These are my witnesses, will testify
Forever what I was and meant to do.
The ideas which I brought to power will stifle
All royalty, all feudalism—look
They live in England, they illuminate
America, they will be faith, religion
For every people—these I kindled, carried
Their flaming torch through Europe as the chief
Torch bearer, soldier, representative."

You were not there, Gourgaud—but wait a minute,
I choke with tears and laughter. Listen now:

Sir Hudson Lowe looked at the Emperor
Contemptuous but not the less bewitched.
And when the Emperor finished, out he drawled
"You make me smile." Why that is memorable:
It should be carved upon Sir Hudson's stone.
He was a prophet, founder of the sect
Of smilers and of laughers through the world,
Smilers and laughers that the Emperor
Told every whit the truth. Look you at Europe,
What were it in this day except for France,
Napoleon's France, the revolution's France?
What will it be as time goes on but peoples
Made free through France?

I take the good and ill,
Think over how he lounged, lay late in bed,
Spent long hours in the bath, counted the hours,
Pale, broken, wracked with pain, insulted, watched,
His child torn from him, Josephine and wife
Silent or separate, waiting long for death,
Looking with filméd eyes upon his wings
Broken, upon the rocks stretched out to gain
A little sun, and crying to the sea
With broken voice—I weep when I remember
Such things which you and I from day to day
Beheld, nor could not mitigate. But then
There is that night of thunder, and the dawning
And all that day of storm and toward the evening

He says: "Deploy the eagles!" "Onward!" Well,
I leave the room and say to Steward there:
"The Emperor is dead." That very moment
A crash of thunder deafened us. You see
A great age boomed in thunder its renewal—
Drink to me, clasp my hand, embrace me, friend.

DRAW THE SWORD, O REPUBLIC!

By the blue sky of a clear vision,
And by the white light of a great illumination,
And by the blood-red of brotherhood,
Draw the sword, O Republic!
Draw the sword!

For the light which is England,
And the resurrection which is Russia,
And the sorrow which is France,
And for peoples everywhere
Crying in bondage,
And in poverty!

You have been a leaven in the earth, O Republic!
And a watch-fire on the hill-top scattering sparks;
And an eagle clanging his wings on a cloud-wrapped promontory:
Now the leaven must be stirred,
And the brands themselves carried and touched
To the jungles and the black-forests.
Now the eaglets are grown, they are calling,
They are crying to each other from the peaks—
They are flapping their passionate wings in the sunlight,
Eager for battle!

DRAW THE SWORD, O REPUBLIC!

As a strong man nurses his youth
To the day of trial;
But as a strong man nurses it no more
On the day of trial,
But exults and cries: For Victory, O Strength!
And for the glory of my City, O treasured youth!
You shall neither save your youth,
Nor hoard your strength
Beyond this hour, O Republic!

For you have sworn
By the passion of the Gaul,
And the strength of the Teuton,
And the will of the Saxon,
And the hunger of the Poor,
That the white man shall lie down by the black man,
And by the yellow man,
And all men shall be one spirit, as they are one flesh,
Through Wisdom, Liberty and Democracy.
And forasmuch as the earth cannot hold
Aught beside them,
You have dedicated the earth, O Republic,
To Wisdom, Liberty and Democracy!

By the Power that drives the soul to Freedom,
And by the Power that makes us love our fellows,

And by the Power that comforts us in death,
Dying for great races to come—
Draw the sword, O Republic!
Draw the Sword!

* * * * *

DEAR OLD DICK

(Dedicated to Vachel Lindsay and in Memory of Richard E. Burke)

Said dear old Dick
To the colored waiter:
"Here, George! be quick
Roast beef and a potato.
I'm due at the courthouse at half-past one,
You black old scoundrel, get a move on you!
I want a pot of coffee and a graham bun.
This vinegar decanter'll make a groove on you,
You black-faced mandril, you grinning baboon—"
"Yas sah! Yas sah," answered the coon.
"Now don't you talk back," said dear old Dick,
"Go and get my dinner or I'll show you a trick
With a plate, a tumbler or a silver castor,
Fuliginous monkey, sired by old Nick."
And the nigger all the time was moving round the table,
Rattling the silver things faster and faster—
"Yes sah! Yas sah, soon as I'se able
I'll bring yo' dinnah as shore as yo's bawn."
"Quit talking about it; hurry and be gone,
You low-down nigger," said dear old Dick.

Then I said to my friend: "Suppose he'd up and stick
A knife in your side for raggin' him so hard;

Or how would you relish some spit in your broth?
Or a little Paris green in your cheese for chard?
Or something in your coffee to make your stomach
froth?
Or a bit of asafoetida hidden in your pie?
That's a gentlemanly nigger or he'd black your eye."

Then dear old Dick made this long reply:
"You know, I love a nigger,
And I love this nigger.
I met him first on the train from California
Out of Kansas City; in the morning early
I walked through the diner, feeling upset
For a cup of coffee, looking rather surly.
And there sat this nigger by a table all dressed,
Waiting for the time to serve the omelet,
Buttered toast and coffee to the passengers.
And this is what he said in a fine southern way:
'Good mawnin,' sah, I hopes yo' had yo' rest,
I'm glad to see you on dis sunny day.'
Now think! here's a human who has no other cares
Except to please the white man, serve him when he's
starving,
And who has as much fun when he sees you carving
The sirloin as you do, does this black man.
Just think for a minute, how the negroes excel,
Can you beat them with a banjo or a broiling pan?
There's music in their soul as original

As any breed of people in the whole wide earth;
They're elemental hope, heartiness, mirth.
There are only two things real American:
One is Christian Science, the other is the nigger.
Think it over for yourself and see if you can figure
Anything beside that is not imitation
Of something in Europe in this hybrid nation.
Return to this globe five hundred years hence—
You'll see how the fundamental color of the coon
In art, in music, has altered our tune;
We are destined to bow to their influence;
There's a whole cult of music in Dixie alone,
And that is America put into tone."

And dear old Dick gathered speed and said:
"Sometimes through Dvořák a vision arises
To the words of Merneptah whose hands were red:
'I shall live, I shall live, I shall grow, I shall grow,
I shall wake up in peace, I shall thrill with the glow
Of the life of Temu, the god who prizes
Favorite souls and the souls of kings.'
Now these are the words, and here is the dream,
No wonder you think I am seeing things:
The desert of Egypt shimmers in the gleam
Of the noonday sun on my dazzled sight.
And a giant negro as black as night
Is walking by a camel in a caravan.
His great back glistens with the streaming sweat.

The camel is ridden by a light-faced man,
A Greek perhaps, or Arabian.
And this giant negro is rhythmically swaying
With the rhythm of the camel's neck up and down.
He seems to be singing, rollicking, playing;
His ivory teeth are glistening, the Greek is listening
To the negro keeping time like a tabouret.
And what cares he for Memphis town,
Merneptah the bloody, or Books of the Dead,
Pyramids, philosophies of madness or dread?
A tune is in his heart, a reality:
The camel, the desert are things that be,
He's a negro slave, but his heart is free."

Just then the colored waiter brought in the dinner.
"Get a hustle on you, you miserable sinner,"
Said dear old Dick to the colored waiter.
"Heah's a nice piece of beef and a great big potato.
I hopes yo'll enjoy 'em sah, yas I do;
Heah's black mustahd greens, 'specially for yo',
And a fine piece of jowl that I swiped and took
From a dish set by, by the git-away cook.
I hope yo'll enjoy 'em, sah, yas I do."
"Well, George," Dick said, "if Gabriel blew
His horn this minute, you'd up and ascend
To wait on St. Peter world without end."

THE ROOM OF MIRRORS

I saw a room where many feet were dancing.
The ceiling and the wall were mirrors glancing
Both flames of candles and the heaven's light,
Though windows there were none for air or flight.
The room was in a form polygonal
Reached by a little door and narrow hall.
One could behold them enter for the dance,
And waken as it were out of a trance,
And either singly or with some one whirl:
The old, the young, full livers, boy and girl.
And every panel of the room was just
A mirrored door through which a hand was thrust
Here, there, around the room, a soul to seize
Whereat a scream would rise, but no surcease
Of music or of dancing, save by him
Drawn through the mirrored panel to the dim
And unknown space behind the flashing mirrors,
And by his partner struck through by the terrors
Of sudden loss.

And looking I could see
That scarcely any dancer here could free
His eyes from off the mirrors, but would gaze
Upon himself or others, till a craze

Shone in his eyes thus to anticipate
The hand that took each dancer soon or late.
Some analyzed themselves, some only glanced,
Some stared and paled and then more madly danced.
One dancer only never looked at all.
He seemed soul captured by the carnival.
There were so many dancers there he loved,
He was so greatly by the music moved,
He had no time to study his own face
There in the mirrors as from place to place
He quickly danced.

Until I saw at last
This dancer by the whirling dancers cast
Face full against a mirrored panel where
Before he could look at himself or stare
He plunged through to the other side—and quick,
As water closes when you lift the stick,
The mirrored panel swung in place and left
No trace of him, as 'twere a magic trick.
But all his partners thus so soon bereft
Went dancing to the music as before.
But I saw faces in that mirrored door
Anatomizing their forced smiles and watching
Their faces over shoulders, even matching
Their terror with each other's to repress
A growing fear in seeing it was less

Than some one else's, or to ease despair
By looking in a face who did not care,
While watching for the hand that through some door
Caught a poor dancer from the dancing floor
With every time-beat of the orchestra.
What is this room of mirrors? Who can say?

* * * * *

THE LETTER

What does one gain by living? What by dying
Is lost worth having? What the daily things
Lived through together make them worth the while
For their sakes or for life's? Where's the denying
Of souls through separation? There's your smile!
And your hands' touch! And the long day that brings
Half uttered nothings of delight! But then
Now that I see you not, and shall again
Touch you no more—memory can possess
Your soul's essential self, and none the less
You live with me. I therefore write to you
This letter just as if you were away
Upon a journey, or a holiday;
And so I'll put down everything that's new
In this secluded village, since you left. . . .
Now let me think! Well, then, as I remember,
After ten days the lilacs burst in bloom.
We had spring all at once—the long December
Gave way to sunshine. Then we swept your room,
And laid your things away. And then one morning
I saw the mother robin giving warning
To little bills stuck just above the rim
Of that nest which you watched while being built,
Near where she sat, upon a leafless limb,

With folded wings against an April rain.
On June the tenth Edward and Julia married,
I did not go for fear of an old pain.
I was out on the porch as they drove by,
Coming from church. I think I never scanned
A girl's face with such sunny smiles upon it
Showing beneath the roses on her bonnet—
I went into the house to have a cry.
A few days later Kimbrough lost his wife.
Between housework and hoeing in the garden
I read Sir Thomas More and Goethe's life.
My heart was numb and still I had to harden
All memory or die. And just the same
As when you sat beside the window, passed
Larson, the cobbler, hollow-chested, lamed.
He did not die till late November came.
Things did not come as Doctor Jones forecast,
'Twas June when Mary Morgan had her child.
Her husband was in Monmouth at the time.
She had no milk, the baby is not well.
The Baptist Church has got a fine new bell.
And after harvest Joseph Clifford tiled
His bottom land. Then Judy Heaton's crime
Has shocked the village, for the monster killed
Glendora Wilson's father at his door—
A daughter's name was why the blood was spilled.
I could go on, but wherefore tell you more?
The world of men has gone its olden way

With war in Europe and the same routine
Of life among us that you knew when here.
This gossip is not idle, since I say
By means of it what I would tell you, dear:
I have been near you, dear, for I have been
Not with you through these things, but in despite
Of living them without you, therefore near
In spirit and in memory with you.

* * * * *

Do you remember that delightful Inn
At Chester and the Roman wall, and how
We walked from Avon clear to Kenilworth?
And afterward when you and I came down
To London, I forsook the murky town,
And left you to quaint ways and crowded places,
While I went on to Putney just to see
Old Swinburne and to look into his face's
Changeable lights and shadows and to seize on
A finer thing than any verse he wrote?
(Oh beautiful illusions of our youth!)
He did not see me gladly. Talked of treason
To England's greatness. What was Camden like?
Did old Walt Whitman smoke or did he drink?
And Longfellow was sweet, but couldn't think.
His mood was crusty. Lowell made him laugh!
Meantime Watts-Dunton came and broke in half
My visit, so I left.

The thing was this:
None of this talk was Swinburne any more
Than some child of his loins would take his hair,
Eyes, skin, from him in some pangenesis,—
His flesh was nothing but a poor affair,
A channel for the eternal stream—his flesh
Gave nothing closer, mind you, than his book,
But rather blurred it; even his eyes' look
Confused "Madonna Mia" from its fresh
And liquid meaning. So I knew at last
His real immortal self is in his verse.

* * * * *

Since you have gone I've thought of this so much.
I cannot lose you in this universe—
I first must lose myself. The essential touch
Of soul possession lies not in the walk
Of daily life on earth, nor in the talk
Of daily things, nor in the sight of eyes
Looking in other eyes, nor daily bread
Broken together, nor the hour of love
When flesh surrenders depths of things divine
Beyond all vision, as they were the dream
Of other planets, but without these even
In death and separation, there is heaven:
By just that unison and its memory
Which brought our lips together. To be free
From accidents of being, to be freeing

The soul from trammels on essential being,
Is to possess the loved one. I have strayed
Into the only heaven God has made:
That's where we know each other as we are,
In the bright ether of some quiet star,
Communing as two memories with each other.

CANTICLE OF THE RACE

SONG OF MEN

How beautiful are the bodies of men—
The agonists!
Their hearts beat deep as a brazen gong
For their strength's behests.
Their arms are lithe as a seasoned thong
In games or tests
When they run or box or swim the long
Sea-waves crests
With their slender legs, and their hips so strong,
And their rounded chests.

I know a youth who raises his arms
Over his head.
He laughs and stretches and flouts alarms
Of flood or fire.
He springs renewed from a lusty bed
To his youth's desire.
He drowses, for April flames outspread
In his soul's attire.

The strength of men is for husbandry
Of woman's flesh:

Worker, soldier, magistrate
Of city or realm;
Artist, builder, wrestling Fate
Lest it overwhelm
The brood or the race, or the cherished state.
They sing at the helm
When the waters roar and the waves are great,
And the gale is fresh.

There are two miracles, women and men—
Yea, four there be:
A woman's flesh, and the strength of a man,
And God's decree.
And a babe from the womb in a little span
Ere the month be ten.
Their rapturous arms entwine and cling
In the depths of night;
He hunts for her face for his wondering,
And her eyes are bright.
A woman's flesh is soil, but the spring
Is man's delight.

SONG OF WOMEN

How beautiful is the flesh of women—
Their throats, their breasts!
My wonder is a flame which burns,
A flame which rests;

CANTICLE OF THE RACE

It is a flame which no wind turns,
And a flame which quests.

I know a woman who has red lips,
Like coals which are fanned.
Her throat is tied narcissus, it dips
From her white-rose chin.
Her throat curves like a cloud to the land
Where her breasts begin.
I close my eyes when I put my hand
On her breast's white skin.

The flesh of women is like the sky
When bare is the moon:
Rhythm of backs, hollow of necks,
And sea-shell loins.
I know a woman whose splendors vex
Where the flesh joins—
A slope of light and a circumflex
Of clefts and coigns.
She thrills like the air when silence wrecks
An ended tune.

These are the things not made by hands in the earth:
Water and fire,
The air of heaven, and springs afresh,
And love's desire.
And a thing not made is a woman's flesh,

Sorrow and mirth!
She tightens the strings on the lyric lyre,
And she drips the wine.
Her breasts bud out as pink and nesh
As buds on the vine:
For fire and water and air are flesh,
And love is the shrine.

Song of the Human Spirit

How beautiful is the human spirit
In its vase of clay!
It takes no thought of the chary dole
Of the light of day.
It labors and loves, as it were a soul
Whom the gods repay
With length of life, and a golden goal
At the end of the way.

There are souls I know who arch a dome,
And tunnel a hill.
They chisel in marble and fashion in chrome,
And measure the sky.
They find the good and destroy the ill,
And they bend and ply
The laws of nature out of a will
While the fates deny.

CANTICLE OF THE RACE

I wonder and worship the human spirit
When I behold
Numbers and symbols, and how they reach
Through steel and gold;
A harp, a battle-ship, thought and speech,
And an hour foretold.
It ponders its nature to turn and teach,
And itself to mould.

The human spirit is God, no doubt,
Is flesh made the word:
Jesus, Beethoven and Raphael,
And the souls who heard
Beyond the rim of the world the swell
Of an ocean stirred
By a Power on the waters inscrutable.
There are souls who gird
Their loins in faith that the world is well,
In a faith unblurred.
How beautiful is the human spirit—
The flesh made the word!

* * * * *

BLACK EAGLE RETURNS TO ST. JOE

This way and that way measuring,
Sighting from tree to tree,
And from the bend of the river.
This must be the place where Black Eagle
Twelve hundred moons ago
Stood with folded arms,
While a Pottawatomie father
Plunged a knife in his heart,
For the murder of a son.
Black Eagle stood with folded arms,
Slim, erect, firm, unafraid,
Looking into the distance, across the river.
Then the knife flashed,
Then the knife crashed through his ribs
And into his heart.
And like a wounded eagle's wings
His arms fell, slowly unfolding,
And he sank to death without a groan!

And my name is Black Eagle too.
And I am of the spirit,
And perhaps of the blood
Of that Black Eagle of old.
I am naked and alone,

But very happy;
Being rich in spirit and in memories.
I am very strong.
I am very proud,
Brave, revengeful, passionate.
No longer deceived, keen of eye,
Wise in the ways of the tribes:
A knower of winds, mists, rains, snows, changes.
A knower of balsams, simples, blossoms, grains.
A knower of poisonous leaves, deadly fungus, berries.
A knower of harmless snakes,
And the livid copperhead.
Lastly a knower of the spirits,
For there are many spirits:
Spirits of hidden lakes,
And of pine forests.
Spirits of the dunes,
And of forested valleys.
Spirits of rivers, mountains, fields,
And great distances.
There are many spirits
Under the Great Spirit.
Him I know not.
Him I only feel
With closed eyes.
Or when I look from my bed of moss by the river
At a sky of stars,

When the leaves of the oak are asleep.
I will fill this birch bark full of writing
And hide it in the cleft of an oak,
Here where Black Eagle fell.
Decipher my story who can:

When I was a boy of fourteen
Tobacco Jim, who owned many dogs,
Rose from the door of his tent
And came to where we were running,
Young Coyote, Rattler, Little Fox,
And said to me in their hearing:
"You are the fastest of all.
Now run again, and let me see.
And if you can run
I will make you my runner,
I will care for you,
And you shall have pockets of gold." . . .

And then we ran.
And the others lagged behind me,
Like smoke behind the wind.
But the faces of Young Coyote, Rattler, Little Fox
Grew dark.
They nudged each other.
They looked side-ways,
Toeing the earth in shame. . . .

Then Tobacco Jim took me and trained me.
And he went here and there
To find a match.
And to get wagers of ponies, nuggets of copper,
And nuggets of gold.
And at last the match was made.

It was under a sky as blue as the cup of a harebell,
It was by a red and yellow mountain,
It was by a great river
That we ran.
Hundreds of Indians came to the race.
They babbled, smoked and quarreled.
And everyone carried a knife,
And everyone carried a gun.
And we runners—
How young we were and unknowing
What the race meant to them!
For we saw nothing but the track,
We saw nothing but our trainers
And the starters.
And I saw no one but Tobacco Jim.
But the Indians and the squaws saw much else.
They thought of the race in such different ways
From the way we thought of it.
For with me it was honor,
It was triumph,
It was fame.

It was the tender looks of Indian maidens
Wherever I went.
But now I know that to Tobacco Jim,
And the old fathers and young bucks
The race meant jugs of whiskey,
And new guns.
It meant a squaw,
A pony,
Or some rise in the life of the tribe.

So the shot of the starter rang at last,
And we were off.
I wore a band of yellow around my brow
With an eagle's feather in it,
And a red strap for my loins.
And as I ran the feather fluttered and sang:
"You are the swiftest runner, Black Eagle,
They are all behind you."
And they were all behind me,
As the cloud's shadow is behind
The bend of the grass under the wind.
But as we neared the end of the race
The onlookers, the gamblers, the old Indians,
And the young bucks,
Crowded close to the track—
I fell and lost.

Next day Tobacco Jim went about
Lamenting his losses.

And when I told him they tripped me
He cursed them.
But later he went about asking in whispers
If I was wise enough to throw the race.
Then suddenly he disappeared.
And we heard rumors of his riches,
Of his dogs and ponies,
And of the joyous life he was leading.

Then my father took me to New Mexico,
And here my life changed.
I was no longer the runner,
I had forgotten it all.
I had become a wise Indian.
I could do many things.
I could read the white man's writing
And write it.

And Indians flocked to me:
Billy the Pelican, Hooked Nosed Weasel,
Hungry Mole, Big Jawed Prophet,
And many others.
They flocked to me, for I could help them.
For the Great Spirit may pick a chief,
Or a leader.
But sometimes the chief rises
By using wise Indians like me
Who are rich in gifts and powers . . .

But at least it is true:
All little great Indians
Who are after ponies,
Jugs of whiskey and soft blankets
Gain their ends through the gifts and powers
Of wise Indians like me.
They come to you and ask you to do this,
And to do that.
And you do it, because it would be small
Not to do it.
And until all the cards are laid on the table
You do not see what they were after,
And then you see:
They have won your friend away;
They have stolen your hill;
They have taken your place at the feast;
They are wearing your feathers;
They have much gold.
And you are tired, and without laughter.
And they drift away from you,
As Tobacco Jim went away from me.
And you hear of them as rich and great.
And then you move on to another place,
And another life.

Billy the Pelican has built him a board house
And lives in Guthrie.
Hook Nosed Weasel is a Justice of the Peace.

BLACK EAGLE RETURNS TO ST. JOE

Hungry Mole had his picture in the Denver News;
He is helping the government
To reclaim stolen lands.
(Many have told me it was Hungry Mole
Who tripped me in the race.)
Big Jawed Prophet is very rich.
He has disappeared as an eagle
With a rabbit.
And I have come back here
Where twelve hundred moons ago
Black Eagle before me
Had the knife run through his ribs
And through his heart. . . .

I will hide this writing
In the cleft of the oak
By this bend in the river.
Let him read who can:
I was a swift runner whom they tripped.

MY LIGHT WITH YOURS

I

When the sea has devoured the ships,
And the spires and the towers
Have gone back to the hills.
And all the cities
Are one with the plains again.
And the beauty of bronze,
And the strength of steel
Are blown over silent continents,
As the desert sand is blown—
My dust with yours forever.

II

When folly and wisdom are no more,
And fire is no more,
Because man is no more;
When the dead world slowly spinning
Drifts and falls through the void—
My light with yours
In the Light of Lights forever!

THE BLIND

Amid the din of cars and automobiles,
At the corner of a towering pile of granite,
Under the city's soaring brick and stone,
Where multitudes go hurrying by, you stand
With eyeless sockets playing on a flute.
And an old woman holds the cup for you,
Wherein a curious passer by at times
Casts a poor coin.

You are so blind you cannot see us men
As walking trees!
I fancy from the tune
You play upon the flute, you have a vision
Of leafy trees along a country road-side,
Where wheat is growing and the meadow-larks
Rise singing in the sun-shine!
In your darkness
You may see such things playing on your flute
Here in the granite ways of mad Chicago!

And here's another on a farther corner,
With head thrown back as if he searched the skies.
He's selling evening papers, what's to him
The flaring headlines? Yet he calls the news.

That is his flute, perhaps, for one can call,
Or play the flute in blindness.

Yet I think
It's neither news nor music with these blind ones—
Rather the hope of re-created eyes,
And a light out of death!
"How can it be," I hear them over and over,
"There never shall be eyes for me again?"

"I PAY MY DEBT FOR LAFAYETTE AND ROCHAMBEAU"

—His Own Words

In Memory of Kiffin Rockwell

* * * * *

Eagle, whose fearless
Flight in vast spaces
Clove the inane,
While we stood tearless,
White with rapt faces
In wonder and pain. . . .

Heights could not awe you,
Depths could not stay you.
Anguished we saw you,
Saw Death way-lay you
Where the storm flings
Black clouds to thicken
Round France's defender!
Archangel stricken
From ramparts of splendor—
Shattered your wings! . . .

But Lafayette called you,
Rochambeau beckoned.

Duty enthralled you.
For France you had reckoned
Her gift and your debt.
Dull hearts could harden
Half-gods could palter.
For you never pardon
If Liberty's altar
You chanced to forget. . . .

Stricken archangel!
Ramparts of splendor
Keep you, evangel
Of souls who surrender
No banner unfurled
For ties ever living,
Where Freedom has bound them.
Praise and thanksgiving
For love which has crowned them—
Love frees the world! . . .

* * * * *

CHRISTMAS AT INDIAN POINT

Who is that calling through the night,
A wail that dies when the wind roars?
We heard it first on Shipley's Hill,
It faded out at Comingoer's.

Along five miles of wintry road
A horseman galloped with a cry,
"'Twas two o'clock," said Herman Pointer,
"When I heard clattering hoofs go by."

"I flung the winder up to listen;
I heerd him there on Gordon's Ridge;
I heerd the loose boards bump and rattle
When he went over Houghton's Bridge."

Said Roger Ragsdale: "I was doctorin'
A heifer in the barn, and then
My boy says: 'Pap, that's Billy Paris.'
'There,' says my boy, it is again."

"Says I: 'That kain't be Billy Paris,
We seed 'im at the Christmas tree.
It's two o'clock,' says I, 'and Billy
I seed go home with Emily.'

"'He is too old for galavantin'
Upon a night like this,' says I.
'Well, pap,' says he, 'I know that frosty,
Good-natured huskiness in that cry.'

"'It kain't be Billy,' says I, swabbin'
The heifer's tongue and mouth with brine,
'I never thought—it makes me shiver,
And goose-flesh up and down the spine.'"

Said Doggie Traylor: "When I heard it
I 'lowed 'twas Pin Hook's rowdy new 'uns.
Them Cashner boys was at the schoolhouse
Drinkin' there at the Christmas doin's."

Said Pete McCue: "I lit a candle
And held it up to the winder pane.
But when I heerd again the holler
'Twere half-way down the Bowman Lane."

Said Andy Ensley: "First I knowed
I thought he'd thump the door away.
I hopped from bed, and says, 'Who is it?'
'O, Emily,' I heard him say.

"And there stood Billy Paris tremblin',
His face so white, he looked so queer.
'O Andy'—and his voice went broken.
'Come in,' says I, 'and have a cheer.'

"'Sit by the fire,' I kicked the logs up,
'What brings you here?—I would be told.'
Says he. 'My hand just . . . happened near hers,
It teched her hand . . . and it war cold.

"'We got back from the Christmas doin's
And went to bed, and she was sayin',
(The clock struck ten) if it keeps snowin'
To-morrow there'll be splendid sleighin'.'

"'My hand teched hers, the clock struck two,
And then I thought I heerd her moan.
It war the wind, I guess, for Emily
War lyin' dead. . . . She's thar alone.'

"I left him then to call my woman
To tell her that her mother died.
When we come back his voice was steady,
The big tears in his eyes was dried.

"He just sot there and quiet like
Talked 'bout the fishin' times they had,
And said for her to die on Christmas
Was somethin' 'bout it made him glad.

"He grew so cam he almost skeered us.
Says he: 'It's a fine Christmas over there.'
Says he: 'She was the lovingest woman
That ever walked this Vale of Care.'

"Says he: 'She allus laughed and sang,
I never heerd her once complain.'
Says he: 'It's not so bad a Christmas
When she can go and have no pain.'

"Says he: 'The Christmas's good for her.'
Says he: . . . 'Not very good for me.'
He hid his face then in his muffler
And sobbed and sobbed, 'O Emily.'"

* * * * *

WIDOW LA RUE

I

What will happen, Widow La Rue?
For last night at three o'clock
You woke and saw by your window again
Amid the shadowy locust grove
The phantom of the old soldier:
A shadow of blue, like mercury light—
What will happen, Widow La Rue?

* * * * *

What may not happen
In this place of summer loneliness?
For neither the sunlight of July,
Nor the blue of the lake,
Nor the green boundaries of cool woodlands,
Nor the song of larks and thrushes,
Nor the bravuras of bobolinks,
Nor scents of hay new mown,
Nor the ox-blood sumach cones,
Nor the snow of nodding yarrow,
Nor clover blossoms on the dizzy crest
Of the bluff by the lake
Can take away the loneliness
Of this July by the lake!

* * * * *

Last night you saw the old soldier
By your window, Widow La Rue!
Or was it your husband you saw,
As he lay by the gate so long ago?
With the iris of his eyes so black,
And the white of his eyes so china-blue,
And specks of blood on his face,
Like a wall specked by a shake of a brush;
And something like blubber or pinkish wax,
Hiding the gash in his throat,—
The serum and blood blown up by the breath
From emptied lungs.

II

So Widow La Rue has gone to a friend
For the afternoon and the night,
Where the phantom will not come,
Where the phantom may be forgotten.
And scarcely has she turned the road,
Round the water-mill by the creek,
When the telephone rings and daughter Flora
Springs up from a drowsy chair
And the ennui of a book,
And runs to answer the call.
And her heart gives a bound,
And her heart stops still,
As she hears the voice, and a faintness courses

Quick as poison through all her frame.
And something like bees swarming in her breast
Comes to her throat in a surge of fear,
Rapture, passion, for what is the voice
But the voice of her lover?
And just because she is here alone
In this desolate summer-house by the lake;
And just because this man is forbidden
To cross her way, for a taint in his blood
Of drink, from a father who died of drink;
And just because he is in her thought
By night and day,
The voice of him heats her through like fire.
She sways from dizziness,
The telephone falls from her shaking hand. . . .
He is in the village, is walking out,
He will be at the door in an hour.

III

The sun is half a hand above the lake
In a sky of lemon-dust down to the purple vastness.
On the dizzy crest of the bluff the balls of clover
Bow in the warm wind blowing across a meadow
Where hay-cocks stand new-piled by the harvesters
Clear to the forest of pine and beech at the meadow's
end.
A robin on the tip of a poplar's spire

Sings to the sinking sun and the evening planet.
Over the olive green of the darkening forest
A thin moon slits the sky and down the road
Two lovers walk.

It is night when they reappear
From the forest, walking the hay-field over.
And the sky is so full of stars it seems
Like a field of buckwheat. And the lovers look up,
Then stand entranced under the silence of stars,
And in the silence of the scented hay-field
Blurred only by a lisp of the listless water
A hundred feet below.
And at last they sit by a cock of hay,
As warm as the nest of a bird,
Hand clasped in hand and silent,
Large-eyed and silent.

* * * * *

O, daughter Flora!
Delicious weakness is on you now,
With your lover's face above you.
You can scarcely lift your hand,
Or turn your head
Pillowed upon the fragrant hay.
You dare not open your moistened eyes
For fear of this sky of stars,
For fear of your lover's eyes.

The trance of nature has taken you
Rocked on creation's tide.
And the kinship you feel for this man,
Confessed this night—so often confessed
And wondered at—
Has coiled its final sorcery about you.
You do not know what it is,
Nor care what it is,
Nor care what fate is to come,—
The night has you.
You only move white, fainting hands
Against his strength, then let them fall.
Your lips are parted over set teeth;
A dewy moisture with the aroma of a woman's body
Maddens your lover,
And in a swift and terrible moment
The mystery of love is unveiled to you. . . .

Then your lover sits up with a sigh.
But you lie there so still with closed eyes.
So content, scarcely breathing under that ocean of stars.
A night bird calls, and a vagrant zephyr
Stirs your uncoiled hair on your bare bosom,
But you do not move.
And the sun comes up at last
Finding you asleep in his arms,
There by the hay cock.

And he kisses your tears away,
And redeems his word of last night,
For down to the village you go
And take your vows before the Pastor there,
And then return to the summer house. . . .
All is well.

IV

Widow La Rue has returned
And is rocking on the porch—
What is about to happen?
For last night the phantom of the old soldier
Appeared to her again—
It followed her to the house of her friend,
And appeared again.
But more than ever was it her husband,
With the iris of his eyes so black,
And the white of his eyes so china-blue.
And while she thinks of it,
And wonders what is about to happen,
She hears laughter,
And looking up, beholds her daughter
And the forbidden lover.

* * * * *

And then the daughter and her husband
Come to the porch and the daughter says:

"We have just been married in the village, mother;
Will you forgive us?
This is your son; you must kiss your son."
And Widow La Rue from her chair arises
And calmly takes her child in her arms,
And clasps his hand.
And after gazing upon him
Imperturbably as Clytemnestra looked
Upon returning Agamemnon,
With a light in her eyes which neither fathomed,
She kissed him,
And in a calm voice blessed them.
Then sent her daughter, singing,
On an errand back to the village
To market for dinner, saying:
"We'll talk over plans, my dear."

V

And the young husband
Rocks on the porch without a thought
Of the lightning about to strike.
And like Clytemnestra, Widow La Rue
Enters the house.
And while he is rocking, with all his spirit in a rythmic
rapture,
The Widow La Rue takes a seat in the room
By a window back of the chair where he rocks,

And drawing the shade
She speaks:

"These two nights past I have seen the phantom of the
old soldier
Who haunts the midnights
Of this summer loneliness.
And I knew that a doom was at hand. . . .
You have married my daughter, and this is the
doom. . . .
O, God in heaven!"
Then a horror as of a writhing whiteness
Winds out of the July glare
And stops the flow of his blood,
As he hears from the re-echoing room
The voice of Widow La Rue
Moving darkly between banks
Of delirious fear and woe!

"Be calm till you hear me through. . . .
Do not move, or enter here,
I am hiding my face from you. . . .
Hear me through, and then fly.
I warned her against you, but how could I tell her
Why you were not for her?
But tell me now, have you come together?
No? Thank God for that. . . .
For you must not come together. . . .

WIDOW LA RUE

Now listen while I whisper to you:
My daughter was born of a lawless love
For a man I loved before I married,
And when, for five years, no child came
I went to this man
And begged him to give me a child. . . .
Well then . . . the child was born, your wife as it seems. . . .
And when my husband saw her,
And saw the likeness of this man in her face
He went out of the house, where they found him later
By the entrance gate
With the iris of his eyes so black,
And the white of his eyes so china-blue,
And specks of blood on his face,
Like a wall specked by a shake of a brush.
And something like blubber or pinkish wax
Hiding the gash in his throat—
The serum and blood blown up by the breath
From emptied lungs. Yes, there by the gate, O God!
Quit rocking your chair! Don't you understand?
Quit rocking your chair! Go! Go!
Leap from the bluff to the rocks on the shore!
Take down the sickle and end yourself!
You don't care, you say, for all I've told you?
Well, then, you see, you're older than Flora. . . .
And her father died when she was a baby. . . .
And you were four when your father died. . . .

And her father died on the very day
That your father died,
At the very same moment. . . .
On the very same bed. . . .
Don't you understand?"

VI

He ceases to rock. He reels from the porch,
He runs and stumbles to reach the road.
He yells and curses and tears his hair.
He staggers and falls and rises and runs.
And Widow La Rue
With the eyes of Clytemnestra
Stands at the window and watches him
Running and tearing his hair.

VII

She seems so calm when the daughter returns.
She only says: "He has gone to the meadow,
He will soon be back. . . ."
But he never came back.

And the years went on till the daughter's hair
Was white as her mother's there in the grave.
She was known as the bride whom the bridegroom left
And didn't say good-bye.

* * * * *

DR. SCUDDER'S CLINICAL LECTURE

I lectured last upon the morbus sacer,
Or falling sickness, epilepsy, of old
In Palestine and Greece so much ascribed
To deities or devils. To resume
We find it caused by morphological
Changes of the cortex cells. Sometimes,
More times, indeed, the anatomical
Basis, if one be, escapes detection.
For many functions of the cortex are
Unknown, as I have said.

And now remember
Mercier's analysis of heredity:
Besides direct transmission of unstable
Nervous systems, there remains the law
Hereditary of sanguinity.
Then here's another matter: Parents may
Have normal nervous systems, yet produce
Children of abnormal nerves and minds,
Caused by unsuitable sexual germs.
Let me repeat before I leave the matter
The factors in a perfect organization:
First quality in the germ producing matter;
Then quality in the sperm producing force,

And lastly relative fitness of the two.
We are but plants, however high we rise,
Whatever thoughts we have, or dreams we dream
We are but plants, and all we are and do
Depends upon the seed and on the soil.
What Mendel found in raising peas may lead
To perfect knowledge of the human mind.
There is one law for men and peas, the law
Makes peas of certain matter, and makes men
And mind of certain matter, all depends
Not on a varying law, but on a law
Varied in its course by matter, as
The arm, which is a lever and which works
By lever principle cannot make use
And form cement with trowel to the forms
It makes of paint or marble.

To resume:
A child may take the qualities of one parent
In some respects, and of the other parent
In some respects. A child may have the traits
Of father at one period of his life,
The mother at one period of his life.
And if the parents' traits are similar
Their traits may be prepotent in a child,
Thus giving rise to qualities convergent.
So if you take a circle and draw off
A line which would become another circle

If drawn enough, completed, but is left
Half drawn or less, that illustrates a mind
Of cumulative heredity. Take John,
My gardener, John, within his sphere is perfect,
John has a mind which is a perfect circle.
A perfect circle can be small, you know.
And so John has good sense within his sphere.
But if some force began to work like yeast
In brain cells, and his mind shot forth a line
To make a larger thinking circle, say
About a great invention, heaven or God,
Then John would be abnormal, till this line
Shot round and joined, became a larger circle.
This is the secret of eccentric genius,
The man is half a sphere, sticks out in space
Does not enclose co-ordinated thought.
He's like a plant mutating, half himself
Half something new and greater. If we looked
To John's heredity we'd find this change
Was manifest in mother or in father
About the self-same period of life,
Most likely in his father. Attributes
Of fathers are inherited by sons,
Of mothers by the daughters.

Now this morning
I take up paranoia. Paranoics
Are often noted for great gifts of mind.

Mahomet, Swedenborg were paranoics,
Joan of Arc, and Ossawatomie Brown,
Cellini, many others. All who think
Themselves inspired of God, and all who see
Themselves appointed to a work, the subjects
Of prophecies are paranoics. All
Who visions have of God or archangels,
Hear voices or celestial music, these
Are paranoics. And whether it be they rise
Enough above the earth to look along
A longer arc and see realities,
Or see strange things through atmospheric strata
Which build up or distort the things they see
Remains the question. Let us wait the proof.

Last week I told you I would have to-day
The skull and brain of Jacob Groesbell here,
And lecture on his case. Here is the brain:
Weight sixteen hundred grammes. Students may look
After the lecture at the brain and skull.
There's nothing anatomical at fault
With this fine brain, so far as I can find.
You'll note how deep the convolutions are,
Arrangement quite symmetrical. The skull
Is well formed too. The jaws are long you'll note,
The palate roof somewhat asymmetrical.
But this is scarce significant. Let me tell
How Jacob Groesbell looked:

The man was tall,
Had shapely hands and feet, but awkward limbs.
His hair was brown and fine, his forehead high,
And ran back at an angle, temples full.
His nose was long and fleshy at the point,
Was tilted to one side. His eyes were gray,
The iris flecked. They looked as if a light
As of a sun-set shone behind them. Ears
Were very large, projected at right angles.
His neck was slender, womanish. His skin
Of finest texture, white and very smooth.
His voice was quiet, musical. His manner
Patient and gentle, modest, reasonable.
His parents, as I learned through inquiry,
Were Methodists, devout and greatly loved.
The mother healthy both in mind and body.
The father was eccentric, perhaps insane.
They were first cousins.

I knew Jacob Groesbell
Ten years before he died. I knew him first
When he was sent to mend my porch. A workman
With saw and hammer never excelled him. Then
As time went on I saw him when he came
At my request to do my carpentry.
I grew to know him, and by slow degrees
He told me of his readings in the Bible,
And gave me his interpretations. At last

Aged forty-six, had ulcers of the stomach,
Which took him off. He sent for me, and said
He wished me to attend him, which I did.
He told me I could have his body and brain
To lecture on, dissect, since some had said
He was insane, he told me, and if so
I should find something wrong with brain or body.
And if I found a wrong then all his visions
Of God and archangels were just the fancies
That come to madmen. So he made provision
To give his brain and body for this cause,
And here's his brain and skull, and I am lecturing
On Jacob Groesbell as a paranoic.

As I have said before, in making tests
And observations of the patient, have
His conversation taken stenographically,
In order to preserve his speech exactly,
And catch the flow if he becomes excited.
So we determine if he makes new words,
If he be incoherent, or repeats.
I took my secretary once to make
A stenographic record. Strange enough
He would not talk while she was writing down.
And when I asked him why, he would not tell.
So I devised a scheme: I took a satchel,
And put in it a dictaphone, and when
A cylinder was full I'd stoop and put

My hand among my bottles in the satchel,
As if I was compounding medicine,
Instead I'd put another cylinder on.
And thus I got his story in his voice,
Just as he talked, with nothing lost at all,
Which you shall hear. For with this megaphone
The students in the farthest gallery
Can hear what Jacob Groesbell said to me,
And weigh the thought that stirred within the brain
Here in this jar beside me. Listen now
To Jacob Groesbell's voice:

"Will you repeat
From the beginning connectedly the story
Of your religious life, illumination,
What you have called your soul's escape?"

"I will,
Since I shall never tell it again."

"I grew up
Timid and sensitive, not very strong,
Not understood of father or of mother.
They did not love me, and I never felt
A tenderness for them. I used to quote:
'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?'
At school I was not liked. I had a chum
From time to time, that's all. And I remember

My mother on a day put with my luncheon
A bottle of milk, and when the noon hour came
I missed it, found some boys had taken it,
And when I asked for it, they made the cry:
'Bottle of milk, bottle of milk,' and I
Flushed through with shame, and cried, and to this hour
It hurts me to remember it. Such days,
All misery! For all my clothes were patched.
They hooted at me. So I lived alone.
At twelve years old I had great fears of death,
And hell, heard devils in my room. One night
During a thunderstorm heard clanking chains,
And hid beneath the pillows. One spring day
As I was walking on the village street
Close to the church I heard a voice which said
'Behold, my son'—and falling on my knees
I prayed in ecstacy—but as I prayed
Some passing school boys laughed, threw stones at me.
A heat ran through me, I arose and fled.
Well, then I joined the church and was baptized.
But something left me in the ceremony,
I lost my ecstacy, seemed slipping back
Into the trap. I took to wandering
In solitary places, could not bear
To see a human face. I slept for nights
In still ravines, or meadows. But one time
Returning to my home, I found the room

Filled up with visitors—my heart stopped short,
And glancing at the faces of my parents
I hurried, bolted through, and did not speak,
Entered a bed-room door and closed it. So
I tell this just to illustrate my shyness,
Which cursed my youth and made me miserable,
Something I fought but could not overcome.
And pondering on the Scriptures I could see
How I resembled the saints, our Saviour even,
How even as my brothers called me mad
They called our Saviour so.

"At fourteen years
My father taught me carpentry, his trade,
And made me work with him. I seemed to be
The butt for jokes and laughter with the men—
I know not why. For now and then they'd drop
A word that showed they knew my secrets, knew
I had heard voices, knew I loathed the lusts
Of women, drink. Oh these were sorry years,
God was not with me though I sought Him ever
And I was persecuted for His sake. My brain
Seemed like to burst at times, saw sparkling lights,
Heard music, voices, made strange shapes of leaves,
Clouds, trunks of trees,—illusions of the devil.
I was turned twenty years when on an evening
Calm, beautiful in June, after a day
Of healthful toil, while sitting on the porch,

The sun just sinking, at my left I heard
A voice of hollow clearness: "You are Christ."
My eyes grew blind with tears for the evil
Of such a thought, soul stained with such a thought,
So devil stained, soul damned with blasphemy.
I ran into my room and seized a pistol
To end my life. God willed it otherwise.
I fainted and awoke upon the floor
After some hours. To heap my suffering full
A few days after this while in the village
I went into a store. The friendly clerk—
I knew him always—said 'What will you have?
I wait first always on the little boys.'
I laughed and went my way. But in an hour
His saying rankled, I began to brood
On ways of vengeance, till it seemed at last
His life must pay. O, soul so full of sin,
So devil tangled, tortured—which not prayer
Nor watching could deliver. So I thought
To save my soul from murder I must fly—
I felt an urging as one does in sleep
Pursued by giant things to fly, to fly
From terror, death, from blankness on the scene,
From emptiness, from beauty gone. The world
Seemed something seen in fever, where the steps
Of men are muffled, and a futile scheme
Impels all steps. So packing up my kit,
My Bible in my pocket, secretly

I disappeared. Next day took up my life
In Barrington, a village thirty miles
From all I knew, besides a lovely lake,
Reached by a road that crossed a bridge
Over a little bay, the bridge's ends
Clustered with boats for fishermen. And here
Night after night I fished, or stood and watched
The star-light on the water.

I grew calmer
Almost found peace, got work to do, and lived
Under a widow's roof, who was devout
And knew my love for God. Now listen, doctor,
To every word: I was now twenty-five,
In perfect health, no longer persecuted,
At peace with all the world, if not my soul
Had wholly found its peace, for truth to tell
It had an ache which sometimes I could feel,
And yet I had this soul awakening.
I know I have been counted mad, so watch
Each detail here and judge.

At four o'clock
The thirtieth day of June, my work being done,
My kit upon my back I walked this road
Toward the village. 'Twas an afternoon
Of clouds, no rain, a little breeze, the tinkle
Of cow bells in the air, a heavenly silence

Pervading nature. Reaching the hill's foot
I sat down by a tree to rest, enjoy
The greenness of the forests, meadows, flats
Along the bay, the blueness of the lake,
The ripple of the water at my feet,
The rythmic babble of the little boats
Tied to the bridge. And as I sat there musing,
Myself lost in the self, in time the clouds
Lifted, blew off, to let the sun go down
Over the waters gloriously to rest.
So as I stared upon the sun on the water,
Some minutes, though I know not for how long,
Out of the splendor of the shining sun
Upon the water, Jesus of Nazareth
Clothed all in white, the nimbus round his brow,
His face all wisdom, love, rose to my view,
And then he spake: 'Jacob, my son, arise
And come with me.'

" And in an instant there
Something fell from me, I became a cloud,
A soul with wings. A glory burned about me.
And in that glory I perceived all things:
I saw the eternal wheels, the deepest secrets
Of creatures, herbs and grass, and stars and suns
And I knew God, and knew all things as God:
The All loving, the Perfect One, the Perfect Wisdom,
Truth, love and purity. And in that instant

Atoms and molecules I saw, and faces,
And how they are arranged order to order,
With no break in the order, one harmonious
Whole of universal life all blended
And interfused with universal love.
And as it was with Shelley so I cried,
And clasped my hands in ecstacy and rose
And started back to climb the hill again,
Scarce knowing, neither caring what I did,
Nor where I went, and thinking if this be
A fancy only of the Saviour then
He will not follow me, and if it be
Himself, indeed, he will not let me fall
After the revelation. As I reached
The brow of the hill, I felt his presence with me
And turned, and saw Him. 'Thou hast faith, my son,
Who knowest me, when they who walked with me
Toward Emmaus knew me not, to whom I told
All secrets of the scriptures beginning at Moses,
Who knew me not till I brake bread and then,
As after thought could say, Did not our heart
Within us burn while he talked. O, Jacob Groesbell,
Thou carpenter, as I was, greatly blessed
With visions and my Father's love, this walk
Is your walk toward Emmaus.' So he talked,
Expounding all the scriptures, telling me
About the race of men who live and move
Along a life of meat and drink and sleep

And comforts of the flesh, while here and there
A hungering soul is chosen to lift up
And re-create the race. 'The prophet, poet
Must seek and must find God to keep the race
Awake to the divine and to the orders
Of universal and harmonious life,
All interfused with Universal love,
Which love is God, lest blindness, atheism,
Which sees no order, reason, no intent
Beat down the race to welter in the mire
When storms, and floods come. And the sons of God,
The leaders of the race from age to age
Are chosen for their separate work, each work
Fits in the given order. All who suffer
The martyrdom of thought, whether they think
Themselves as servants of my Father, or even
Mock at the images and rituals
Which prophets of dead creeds did symbolize
The mystery they sensed, or whether they be
Spirits of laughter, logic, divination
Of human life, the human soul, all men
Who give their essence, blindly or in vision
In faith that life is worth their utmost love,
They are my brothers and my Father's sons.'
So Jesus told me as we took my walk
Toward my Emmaus. After a time we turned
And walked through heading rye and purple vetch
Into an orchard where great rows of pears

Sloped up a hill. It was now evening:
Stretches of scarlet clouds were in the west,
And a half moon was hanging just above
The pears' white blossoms. O, that evening!
We came back to the boats at last and loosed
One of them and rowed out into the bay,
And fished, while the stars appeared. He only said
'Whatever they did with me you too shall do.'
A haziness came on me now. I seem
To find myself alone there in that boat.
At mid-night I awoke, the moon was sunk,
The whippoorwills were singing. I walked home
Back to the village in a silence, peace,
A happiness profound.

"And the next morning
I awoke with aching head, spent body, yet
With spiritual vision so intense I looked
Through things material as if they were
But shadows—old things passed away or grew
A lovelier order. And my heart was full.
Infinitely I loved, and infinitely was loved.
My landlady looked at me sharply, asked
What hour I entered, where I was so late.
I only answered fishing. For I told
No person of my vision, went my way
At carpentry in silence, in great joy.
For archangels and powers were at my side,

They led me, bore me up, instructed me
In mysteries, and voices said to me
'Write' as the voice in Patmos said to John.
I wrote and printed and the village read,
And called me mad. And so I grew to see
The deepest truths of God, and God Himself,
The geniture of all things, of the Word
Becoming flesh in Christ. I knew all ages,
Times, empires, races, creeds, the human weakness
Which makes life wearisome, confused and pained,
And how the search for something (it is God)
Makes divers worships, fire, the sun, and beasts
Takes form in Eleusinian mysteries
Or festivals where sex, the vine, the Earth
At harvest time have praise or reverence.
I knew God, talked with God, and knew that God
Is more than Thought or Love. Our twisted brains
Are but the wires in the bulb which stays,
Resists the current and makes human thought.
As the electric current is not light
But heat and power as well. Our little brains
Resist God and make thought and love as well.
But God is more than these. Oh I heard much
Of music, heard the whirring as of wheels,
Or buzzing as of ears when a room is still.
That is the axis of profoundest life
Which turns and rests not. And I heard the cry
And hearing wept, of man's soul, heard the ages,

The epochs of this earth as it were the feet
Of multitudes in corridors. And I knew
The agony of genius and the woe
Of prophets and the great.

"From that next morning
I searched the scriptures with more fervid zeal
Than I had ever done. I could not open
Its pages anywhere but I could find
Myself set forth or mirrored, pointed to.
I could not doubt my destiny was bound
With man's salvation. Jeremiah said
'Take forth the precious from the vile.' Those words
To me were spoken, and to no one else.
And so I searched the scriptures. And I found
I never had a thought, experience, pang,
A state in human life our Saviour had not.
He was a carpenter, and so was I.
He had his soul's illumination, so had I.
His brethren called him mad, they called me mad.
He triumphed over death, so shall I triumph.
For I could, I can feel my way along
Death's stages as a man can reach and feel
Ahead of him along a wall. I know
This body is a shell, a butterfly's
Excreta pushed away with rising wings.

"I searched the scriptures. How should I believe
Paul's story, not my own? Did he not see

At mid-day in the way a light from heaven
Above the brightness of the sun and hear
The voice of Jesus saying to him 'Saul,'
Why persecutest thou me?' And did not Festus,
Before whom Paul stood speaking for himself,
Call Paul a mad man? Even while he spake
Such words as none but men inspired can speak,
As well as words of truth and soberness,
Such as myself speak now.

"And from the scriptures
I passed to studies of the men who came
To great illuminations. You will see
There are two kinds: One's of the intellect,
The understanding, one is of the soul.
The x-ray lets the eye behind the flesh
To see the ribs, or heart beat, choose! So men
In their illumination see the frame-work
Of life or see its spirit, so align
Themselves with Science, Satire, or align
Themselves with Poetry or Prophecy.
So being Aristotle, Rabelais,
Paul, Swedenborg.

"And as the years
Went on, as I had time, was fortunate
In finding books I read of many men
Who had illumination, as I had it. Read

Of Dante's vision, how he found himself
Saw immortality, lost fear of death.
Read Swedenborg, who left the intellect
At fifty-four for God, and entered heaven
Before he quitted life and saw behind
The sun of fire, a sun of love and truth.
Read Whitman who exclaimed to God: 'Thou knowest
My manhood's visionary meditations
Which come from Thee, the ardor and the urge.
Thou lightest my life with rays ineffable
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages.'
Read Blake, Spinoza, Emerson, read Wordsworth
Who wrote of something 'deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue skies, and in the mind of man—
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.'

"And at last they called me
The mad, and learned carpenter. And then—
I'm growing faint. Your hand, hold . . ."

At this point
He fainted, sank into a stupor. There
I watched him, to discover if 'twas death.
But soon I saw him rally, then he spoke.

There was some other talk, but not of moment.
I had to change the cylinder—the talk
Was broken, rambling, and of trifling things,
Throws no light on the case, being sane enough.
He died next morning.

Students who desire
To examine the skull and brain may do so now
At their convenience in the laboratory.

* * * * *

FRIAR YVES

Said Friar Yves: "God will bless
Saint Louis' other-worldliness.
Whatever the fate be, still I fare
To fight for the Holy Sepulcher.
If I survive, I shall return
With precious things from Palestine—
Gold for my purse, spices and wine,
Glory to wear among my kin.
Fame as a warrior I shall win.
But, otherwise, if I am slain
In Jesus' cause, my soul shall earn
Immortal life washed white from sin."

Said Friar Yves: "Come what will—
Riches and glory, death and woe—
At dawn to Palestine I go.
Whether I live or die, I gain
To fly the tepid good and ill
Of daily living in Champagne,
Where those who reach salvation lose
The treasures, raptures of the earth,
Captured, possessed, and made to serve
The gospel love of Jesus' birth,
Sacrifice, death; where even those

Passing from pious works and prayer
To paradise are not received
As those who battled, strove, and lived,
And periled bodies, as I choose
To peril mine, and thus to use
Body and soul to build the throne
Of Louis the Saint, where Joseph's care
Lay Jesus under a granite stone."

Then Friar Yves buckled on
His breastplate, and, at break of dawn,
With crossboy, halberd took his way,
Walked without resting, without pause,
Till the sun hovered at midday
Over a tree of glistening leaves,
Where a spring gurgled. "Hunger gnaws
My stomach," whispered Friar Yves.
"If I," he sighed, "could only gain,
Like yonder spring, an inner source
Of life, and need not dew or rain
Of human love, or human friends,
And thus accomplish my soul's ends
Within myself! No," said the friar;
"There is one water and one fire;
There is one Spirit, which is God.
And what are we but streams and springs
Through which He takes His wanderings?
Lord, I am weak, I am afraid;

Show me the way!" the friar prayed.
"Where do I flow and to what end?
Am I of Thee, or do I blend
Hereafter with Thee?"

Yves heard,
While praying, sounds as when the sod
Teems with a swarm of insect things.
He dropped his halberd to look down,
And then his waking vision blurred,
As one before a light will frown.
His inner ear was caught and stirred
By voices; then the chestnut tree
Became a step beside a throne.
Breathless he lay and fearfully,
While on his brain a vision shone.

Said a Great Voice of sweetest tone:
"The time has come when I must take
The form of man for mankind's sake.
This drama is played long enough
By creatures who have naught of me,
Save what comes up from foam of the sea
To crawling moss or swimming weeds,
At last to man. From heaven in flame,
Pure, whole, and vital, down I fly,
And take a mortal's form and name,
And labor for the race's needs."

Then Friar Yves dreamed the sky
Flushed like a bride's face rosily,
And shot to lightning from its bloom.
The world leaped like a babe in the womb,
And choral voices from heaven's cope
Circled the earth like singing stars:
"O wondrous hope, O sweetest hope,
O passion realized at last;
O end of hunger, fear, and wars,
O victory over the bottomless, vast
Valley of Death!"

A silence fell,
Broke by the voice of Gabriel:
"Music may follow this, O Lord!
Music I hear; I hear discord
Through ages yet to be, as well.
There will be wars because of this,
And wars will come in its despite.
It's noon on the world now; blackest night
Will follow soon. And men will miss
The meaning, Lord! There will be strife
'Twixt Montanist and Ebionite,
Gnostic, Mithraist, Manichean,
'Twixt Christian and the Saracen.
There will be war to win the place
Where you bend death to sovereign life.
Armed kings will battle for the grace

Of rulership, for power and gold
In the name of Jesus. Men will hold
Conclaves of swords to win surcease
Of doctrines of the Prince of Peace.
The seed is good, Lord, make the ground
Good for the seed you scatter round!"

Said the Great Voice of sweetest tone:
"The gardener sprays his plants and trees
To drive out lice and stop disease.
After the spraying, fruit is grown
Ruddy and plump. The shortened eyes
Of men can see this end, although
Leaves wither or a whole tree dies
From what the gardener does to grow
Apples and plums of sweeter flesh.
The gardener lives outside the tree;
The gardener knows the tree can see
What cure is needed, plans afresh
An end foreseen, and there's the will
Wherewith the gardener may fulfil
The orchard's destiny."

So He spake.
And Friar Yves seemed to wake,
But did not wake, and only sunk
Into another dreaming state,
Wherein he saw a woman's form

Leaning against the chestnut's trunk.
Her body was virginal, white, and straight,
And glowed like a dawning, golden, warm,
Behind a robe of writhing green:
As when a rock's wall makes a screen
Whereon the crisscross reflect moves
Of circling water under the rays
Of April sunlight through the sprays
Of budding branches in willow groves—
A liquid mosaic of green and gold—
Thus was her robe.

But to behold
Her face was to forget the youth
Of her white bosom. All her hair
Was tangled serpents; she did wear
A single eye in the middle brow.
Her cheeks were shriveled, and one tooth
Stuck from shrunken gums. A bough
O'ershadowed her the while she gripped
A pail in either hand. One dripped
Clear water; one, ethereal fire.
Then to the Graia spoke the friar:
"Have mercy! Tell me your desire
And what you are?"

Then the Graia said:
"My body is Nature and my head

Is Man, and God has given me
A seeing spirit, strong and free,
Though by a single eye, as even
Man has one vision at a time.
I lift my pails up; mark them well.
With this fire I will burn up heaven,
And with this water I will quench
The flames of hell's remotest trench,
That men may work in righteousness.
Not for the fears of an after hell,
Nor for the rewards which heaven will bless
The soul with when the mountains nod
And the sun darkens, but for love
Of Man and Life, and love of God.
Now look!"

She dashed the pail of fire
Against the vault of heaven. It fell
As would a canopy of blue
Burned by a soldier's careless torch.
She dashed the water into hell,
And a great steam rose up with the smell
Of gaseous coals, which seemed to scorch
All things which on the good earth grew.
"Now," said the Graia, "loiterer,
Awake from slumber, rise and speed
To fight for the Holy Sepulcher—

Nothing is left but Life, indeed—
I have burned heaven! I have quenched hell."

Friar Yves no longer slept;
Friar Yves awoke and wept.

* * * * *

THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

June, but we kept the fire place piled with logs,
And every day it rained. And every morning
I heard the wind and rain among the leaves.
Try as I would my spirits grew no better.
What was it? Was I ill or sick in mind?
I spent the whole day working with my hands,
For there was brush to clear and corn to plant
Between the gusts of rain; and there at night
I sat about the room and hugged the fire.
And the rain dripped and the wind blew, we shivered
For cold and it was June. I ached all through
For my hard labor, why did muscles grow not
To hardness and cure body, if 'twere body,
Or soul if it were soul?

But there at night
As I sat aching, worn, before the hour
Of sleep, and restless in this interval
Of nothingness, the silence out-of-doors,
Timed by the dripping rain, and by the slap
Of cards upon a table by a boarder
Who passed the time in playing solitaire,
Sometimes my ancient host would fill his pipe,
And scrape away the dust of long past years

To show me what had happened in his life.
And as he smoked and talked his aged wife
Would parallel his theme, as a brooks' branches
Formed by a slender island, flow together.
Or yet again she'd intercalate a touch,
An episode or version. And sometimes
He'd make her hush; or sometimes he'd suspend
While she went on to what she wished to finish,
When he'd resume. They talked together thus.
He found the story and began to tell it,
And she hung on his story, told it too.

This night the rain came down in buckets full,
And Claude who brought the logs in showed his breath
Between the opening of the outer door
And the swift on-rush of the room's warm air.
And my host who had hoed the whole day long,
Hearty at eighty years, sat with his pipe
Reading the organ of the Adventists,
His wife beside him knitting.

On the table
Are several magazines with their monthly grist
Of stories and of pictures. O such stories!
Who writes these stories? How does it happen people
Are born into the world to read these stories?
But anyway the lamp is very bad,
And every bone in me aches—and why always

Must one be either reading, knitting, talking?
Why not sit quietly and think?

At last
Between the clicking needles and the slap
Of cards upon the table and the swish
Of rain upon the window my host speaks:
"It says here when the Germans are defeated,
And that means when the Turks are beaten too,
The Christian world will take back Palestine,
And drive the Turks out. God be praised, I hope so."
"Amen" breaks in the wife. "May we both live
To see the day. Perhaps you'll get your trunk back
From Jaffa if the Allies win."

To me
The wife turns and goes on, "He has a trunk,
At least his trunk went on to Jaffa, and
It never came back. The bishop's trunk came back,
But his trunk never came."

And then the husband:
"What are you saying, mother, you go on
As if our friend here knew the story too.
And then you talk as if our hope of the war
Was centered on recovering that trunk."

"Oh, not at all
But if the Allies win, and the trunk is there

In Jaffa you might get it back. You know
You'll never get it back while infidels
Rule Palestine."

The husband says to me:
"It looks as if she thought that trunk of mine,
Which went to Jaffa fifty years ago,
Is in existence yet, when chances are
They kept it for awhile, and sold it off,
Or threw it away."

"They never threw it away.
Why I made him a dozen shirts or more,
And knitted him a lot of lovely socks,
And made him neck-ties, and that trunk contained
Everything that a man might need in absence
A year from home. . And yet they threw it away!"

"They might have done so."

"But they never did.
Perhaps they threw your cabinet tools away?"
"They were too valuable."

"Too valuable,
Fine socks and shirts are worthless are they, yes."

"Not worthless, but fine tools are valuable."
He turns to me: "I lost a box of tools
Sent on to Jaffa, too. The scheme was this:

To work at cabinet making while observing
Conditions there in Palestine, and get ready
To drive the Turks from Palestine."

What's this?
I rub my eyes and wake up to this story.
I'm here in Illinois, in a farmer's house
Who boards stray fishermen, and takes me in.
And in a moment Turks and Palestine,
And that old dream of Louis the Saint arise
And show me how the world is small, and a man
Native to Illinois may travel forth
And mix his life with ancient things afar.
To-day be raising corn here and next month
Walking the streets of Jaffa, in Mycenæ,
Digging for Grecian relics.

So I asked
"Were you in Palestine?" And the wife spoke quick:
"He didn't get there, that's the joke of it."
And the husband said: "It wasn't such a joke.
You see it was this way, myself and the bishop,
He lived in Springfield, I in Pleasant Plains,
Had planned to meet in Switzerland."

"Montreaux"
The wife broke in.
"Montreaux" the husband added.
"You said you two had planned it," she went on.

Now looking over specks and speaking louder:
"The bishop came to him, he planned it out.
My husband didn't plan the trip at all.
He knows the bishop planned it."

Then the husband:
"Oh for that matter he spoke of it first,
And I acceded and we worked it out.
He was to go ahead of me, I was
To come in later, soon as I could raise
What funds my congregation could afford
To spare for this adventure."

"Guess," she said,
"How much it was."

I shook my head and she
Said in a lowered and a tragic voice:
"Four hundred dollars, and you can believe
It strapped his church to raise so great a sum.
And if they hadn't thought that Christ would come
Scarcely before the plan could be put through
Of winning back the Holy Land, that sum
Had never been made up and put in gold
For him to carry in a chamois belt."

And then the husband said: "Mother, be still,
I'll tell our friend the story if you'll let me."

"I'm done," she said. "I wanted to say that.
Go on," she said.

And so he started over:
"The bishop came to me and said he thought
The Advent would be June of seventy-six.
This was the winter of eighteen seventy-one.
He said he had a dream; and in this dream
An angel stood beside him, told him so,
And told him to get me and go to Jaffa,
And live there, learn the people and the country.
We were to live disguised the better to learn
The people and the country. I was to work
At my trade as a cabinet maker, he
At carpentry, which was his trade, and so
No one would know us, or suspect our plan.
And thus we could live undisturbed and work,
And get all things in readiness, that in time
The Lord would send us power, and do all things.
We were the messengers to go ahead
And make the ways straight, so I told her of it."

"You told me, yes, but my trust was as great
As yours was in the bishop, little the good
To tell me of it."

"Well, I told you of it.
And she said, 'If the Lord commands you so

You must obey.' And so she knit the socks
And made that trunk of things, as she has said,
And in six weeks I sailed from Philadelphia."

"'Twas nearer two months," said the wife.

"Perhaps,
Somewhere between six weeks and that. The bishop
Left Springfield in a month from our first talk.
I knew, for I went over when he left.
And I remember how his poor wife cried,
And how the children cried. He had a family
Of some eight children."

"Only seven then,
The son named David died the year before."

"Mother, you're right, 'twas seven children then.
The oldest was not more than twelve, I think,
And all the children cried, and at the train
His congregation almost to a man
Was there to see him off."

"Well, one was missing.
You know, you know," the wife said pregnantly.

"I'll come to that in time, if you'll be still.
Well, so the bishop left, and in six weeks,

Or somewhere there, I started for Montreaux
To meet the bishop. Shipped ahead my trunk
To Jaffa as the bishop did. But now
I must tell you my dream. The night before
I reached Montreaux I had a wondrous dream:
I saw the bishop on the station platform
His face with brandy blossoms splotched and wearing
His gold head cane. And sure enough next day
As I stepped from the train I saw the bishop
His face with brandy blossoms splotched and wearing
His gold head cane. And I thought something wrong,
And still I didn't act upon the thought."

"I should say not," the wife broke in again.

"Oh, well what could I do, if I had thought
More clearly than I did that things were wrong.
You can't uproot the confidence of years
Because of dreams. And as to brandy blossoms
I knew his face was red, but didn't know,
Or think just then, that brandy made it red.
And so I went up to the house he lived in—
A mansion beautiful, and we sat down.
And he sat there bolt upright in a rocker,
Hands spread upon his knees, his black eyes bigger
Than I had ever seen them, eyeing me
Silently for a moment, when he said:
'What money did you bring?' And so I told him.

And he said quickly 'let me have it.' So
I took my belt off, counted out the gold
And gave it to him. And he took it, thrust it
With this hand in this pocket, that in that,
And sat there and said nothing more, just looked!
And then before a word was spoke again
I heard a step upon the stair, the stair
Came down into this room where we were sitting.
And I looked up, and there—I rubbed my eyes—
I looked again, rose from my chair to see,
And saw descending the most lovely woman,
Who was"—

"A lovely woman," sneered the wife
"Well, she was just affinity to the bishop,
That's what she was."

"Affinity is right—
You see she was the leader in the choir,
And she had run away with him, or rather
Had gone abroad upon another boat
And met him in Montreaux. Now from this time
For forty hours or so all is a blank.
I just remember trying to speak and choking,
And flying from the room, the bishop clutching
At my coat sleeve to hold me. After that
I can't recall a thing until I saw
A little cottage way up in the Alps.

I was knocking at the door, was faint and sick,
The door was opened and they took me in,
And warmed me with a glass of wine, and tucked me
In a good bed where I slept half a week.
It seems in my bewilderment I wandered,
Ran, stumbled, climbed for forty hours or so
By rocky chasms, up the piney slopes."

"He might have lost his life," the wife exclaimed.

"These were the kindest people in the world,
A French family. They gave me splendid food,
And when I left two francs to reach the place
Where lived the English Consul, who arranged
After some days for money for my passage
Back to America, and in six weeks
I preached a sermon here in Pleasant Plains."

"Beware of false prophets was the text!" she said.

And I who heard this story through spoke up:
"The thing about this that I fail to get
Concerns this woman, the affinity.
If, as seems evident, she and the bishop
Had planned this run-a-way and used the faith,
And you, the congregation to get money
To do it with, or used you in particular
To get the money for themselves to live on

After they had arrived there in Montreaux,
If all this be" I said, "why did this woman
Descend just at the moment when he asked you
For the money that you had. You might have seen her
Before you gave the money, if you had
You might have held it back."

"I would indeed,
You can be sure I should have held it back."

And then the old wife gasped and dropped her knitting.

"Now, James, you let me answer that, I know.
She was done with the bishop, that's the reason.
Be still and let me answer. Here's the story:
We found out later that the bishop's trunk
And kit of tools had been returned from Jaffa
There to Montreaux, were there that very day,
Which means the bishop never meant to go
To Palestine at all, but meant to meet
This woman in Montreaux and live with her.
Well, that takes money. So he used my husband
To get that money. Now you wonder I see
Why she would chance the spoiling of the scheme,
Descend into the room before my husband
Had given up this money, and this money,
You see, was treated as a common fund
Belonging to the church and to be used

To get back Palestine, and so the bishop
As head of the church, superior to my husband,
Could say 'give me the money'—that was natural,
My husband could not be surprised at that,
Or question it. Well, why did she descend
And almost lose the money? Oh, the cat!
I know what she did, as well as I had seen
Her do it. Yes, she listened at the landing.
And when she heard my husband tell the sum
Which he had brought, it wasn't enough to please her,
And Satan entered in her heart, and she
Waited until she heard the bishop's pockets
Clink with the double eagles, then descended
To expose the bishop and disgrace him there
And everywhere in all the world. Now listen:
She got that money or the most of it
In spite of what she did. For in six weeks
After my husband had returned, she walked,
The brazen thing, the public streets of Springfield
As jaunty as you please, and pretty soon
The bishop died and all the papers printed
The story of his shame."

She had scarce finished
When the man at solitaire threw down the deck
And make a whacking noise and rose and came
Around in front of us and stood and looked
The old man and old woman over, me

He studied too. Then in an organ voice:
"Is there a single verse in the New Testament
That hasn't sprouted one church anyway,
Letting alone the verses that have sprouted
Two, three or four or five? I know of one:
Where is it that it says that "Jesus wept"?
Let's found a church on that verse, "Jesus wept."
With that he went out in the rain and slammed
The door behind him.

The old clergyman
Had fallen asleep. His wife looked up and said,
"That man is crazy, ain't he? I'm afraid."

* * * * *

THE BISHOP'S DREAM OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

A lassie sells the War Cry on the corner
And the big drum booms, and the raucous brass horns
Mingle with the cymbals and the silver triangle.
I stand a moment listening, then my friend
Who studies all religions, finds a wonder
In orphic spectacles like this, lays hold
Upon my arm and draws me to a door
Through which we look and see a room of seats,
A platform at the end, a table on it,
And signs upon the wall, "Jesus is Waiting,"
And "God is Love."

We enter, take a seat.
The band comes in and fills the room to bursting
With horns and drums. They cease and feet are heard,
The crowd has followed, half the seats are full.
After a prayer, a song, the captain mounts
The platform by the table and begins:
"Praise God so many girls are here to-night,
And Sister Trickey, by the grace of God
Saved from the wrath to come, will speak to you."
So Sister Trickey steps upon the platform,
A woman nearing forty, one would say.

Blue-eyed, fair skinned, and yellow haired, a figure
Once trim enough, no doubt, grown stout at last.
She was a pretty woman in her time,
'Twas plain to see. A shrewd intelligence
From living in the world shines in her face.
We settle down to hear from Sister Trickey
And in a moment she begins:

"Young girls:
I thank the Lord for Jesus, for he saved me,
I thank the Lord for Jesus every hour.
No woman ever stained with redder sins
Had greater grace than mine. Praise God for Jesus!
Praise God for blood that washes sins away!
I was a woman fallen till Lord Jesus
Forgave me, helped me up and made me clean.
My name is Lilah Trickey. Let me tell you
How music was my tempter. Oh, you girls,
If there be one before me who can sing
Beware the devil and beware your voice
That it be used for Jesus, not for Satan."

"I had a voice, was leader of the choir,
But Satan entered in my voice to tempt
The bishop of the church, and in my heart
To tempt and use the bishop; in the bishop
Old Satan slipped to lure me from the path.
He fell from grace for listening. And I

Whose voice had turned him over to the devil
Fell as he fell. He dragged me down with him.
No use to make it long, one word's enough:
Old Satan is the first word and the last,
And all between is nothing. It's enough
To say the bishop and myself eloped
Went to Montreaux. He left a wife and children.
And I poor silly thing with promises
Of culture of my voice in Paris, lost
Good name and all. And he lost all as well.
Good name, his soul I fear, because he took
The church's money saying he would use it
To win the Holy Sepulchre, in fact
Intending all the while to use the money
For travel and for keeping up a house
With me as soul-mate. For he never meant
To let me go to Paris for my voice,
He never got enough to pay for that.
On that point he betrayed me, now I see
'Twas God who used him to deceive me there,
And leave me to return to Springfield broken,
An out-cast, fallen woman, shamed and scorned."

"We took a house in Montreaux, plain enough
As we looked at it passing, but within
'Twas sweet and fair as Satan could desire:
Engravings on the wall and marble mantels,
Gilt clocks upon the mantels, lovely rugs,

Chests full of linen, silver, pewter, china,
Soft beds with canopies of figured satin,
The scent of apple blossoms through the rooms.
A little garden, vines against the wall.
There were the lake and mountains. Oh, but Satan
Baited the hook with beauty. But the bishop
Seemed self-absorbed, depressed and never smiled.
And every time his face came close to mine
I smelled the brandy on him. Conscience whipped
Its venomed tail against his peace of mind.
And so he took the brandy to benumb
The sting of conscience and to dull the pain.
He told me he had business in Montreaux
Which would require some weeks, would there be met
By people who had money for him. I
Was twenty-three and green, besides I walked
In dreamland thinking of the promised schooling
In Paris—oh 'twas music, as I said." . . .

"At last one day he said a friend was coming,
And he went to the station. Very soon
I heard their steps, the bishop and his friend.
They entered. I was curious and sat
Upon the stair-way's landing just to hear.
And this is what I heard. The bishop asked:
'You've brought some money, how much have you
brought?'
The man replied 'four hundred dollars.' Then

The bishop said: 'I'll take it.' In a moment
I heard the clinking gold and heard the bishop
Putting it in his pocket."

"God forgive me,
I never was so angry in my life.
The bishop had been talking in big figures,
We would have thousands for my voice and Paris,
And here was just a paltry sum. Scarce knowing
Just what I did, perhaps I wished to see
The American who brought the money—well,
No matter what it was, I walked in view
Upon the landing, stood there for a moment
And saw our visitor, a clergyman
From all appearances. He stared, grew red,
Large eyed and apoplectic, then he rose,
Walked side-ways, backward, stumbled toward the door,
Rattled with shaking hand the knob and jerked
The door ajar, with open mouth backed out
Upon the street and ran. I heard him run
A square at least."

"The bishop looked at me,
His face all brandy blossoms, left the room,
Came back at once with brandy on his breath.
And all that day was tippling, went to bed
So drunk I had to take his clothing off
And help him in."

"Young girls, beware of music,
Save only hymns and sacred oratorios.
Beware the theatre and dancing hall.
Take lesson from my fate.

"The morning came.
The bishop called me, he was very ill
And pale with fear. He had a dream that night.
Satan had used him and abandoned him.
And Death, whom only Jesus can put down,
Was standing by the bed. He called to me,
And said to me:

"'That money's in that drawer.
Use it to reach America, but use it
To send my body back. Death's in the corner
Behind that cabinet—there—see him look!
I had a dream—go get a pen and paper,
And write down what I tell you. God forgive me—
Oh what a blasphemer am I. O, woman,
To lie here dying and to know that God
Has left me—hell awaits me—horrible!
Last night I dreamed this man who brought the money,
This man and I were walking from Damascus,
And in a trice came down to Olivet.
Just then great troops of men sprang up around us
And hailed us as expecting our approach.
And there I saw the faces—hundreds maybe,

Of congregations who had trusted me
In all the long past years—Oh, sinful woman,
Why did you cross my path,' he moaned at times,
'And wreck my ministry'

"'And so these crowds
Armed as it seemed, exulted, called me general,
And shouted forward. So we ran like mad
And came before a building with a dome—
You know—I've seen a picture of it somewhere.
And so the crowds yelled: let the bishop enter
And see the sepulchre, while we keep guard.
They pushed me in. But when I was inside
There was no dome, above us was the sky,
And what seemed walls was nothing but a fence.
Before us was a stable with a stall
Where two cows munched the hay. There was a farmer
Who with a pitchfork bedded down the stall.
"Where is the holy sepulchre?" I asked—
"My army's at the door." He kept at work
And never raised his eyes and only said:
"Don't know; I haven't time for things like that.
You're 'bout the hundredth man who's asked me that.
We don't know where it is, nor do we care.
We live here and we knew him, so we feel
Less interest than you. But have you thought
If you should find it it would only be
A tomb like other tombs? Why look at this:

Here is the very manger where he lay—
What is it? Just a manger filled with straw.
These cows are not the very cows you know—
But cows are cows in every age and place.
I think that board there has been nailed on since.
Outside of that the place is just the same.
Now what's the good of seeing it? His mother
Lay in that corner there, what if she did?
That lantern on the wall's the very one
They came to see the child with from the inn—
What of it? Take your army and go on,
And leave me with my barn and with my cows."

" 'So all the glory vanished! Devil magic
Stripped all the glory off. No angels singing,
No star of Bethlehem, no magi kneeling,
No Mary crowned, no Jesus King, no mystic
Blood for sins' remission—just a barn,
A stall, two cows, a lantern—all the glory
Swept from the gospel. That's my punishment:
My poor weak brain filled full of all this dream,
Which seems as real as life—to lie here dying
Too weak to shake the dream! To see Death there
Behind that cabinet—there—see him look—
By God forsaken—all theology,
All mystery, all wonder, all delight
Of spiritual vision swept away as clean
As winds sweep up the clouds, and thus to see

While dying, just a manger, and two cows,
A lantern on the wall.

"'And thus to see,
For blasphemy that duped an honest heart,
And took the pitiful dollars of the flock
To win you with—oh, woman, woman, woman,
A barn, a stall, a lantern limned so clear
In such a daylight of clear seeing senses
That all the splendor, the miraculous
Wonder of the virgin, nimbused child,
The star that followed till it rested over
The manger (such a manger) all are wrecked,
All blotted from belief, all snatched away
From hands pushed off by God, no longer holding
The robes of God.'

"And so the bishop raved
While I stood terrified, since I could feel
Death in the room, and almost see the monster
Behind the cabinet.

"Then the bishop said:
" 'My dream went on. I crossed the stable yard
And passed into a place of tombs. And look!
Before I knew I stepped into a hole,
A sunken grave with just a slab at head,
And "Jesus" carven on it, nothing else,
No date, no birth, no parentage.'"

"'I lie
Tormented by the pictures of this dream.
Woman, take to your death bed with clear mind
Of gospel faith, clean conscience, sins forgiven.
The thoughts that we must suffer with and die with
Are worth the care of all the days of life.
All life should be directed to this end,
Lest when the mind lies fallen, vultures swoop,
And with their wings blot out the sun of faith,
And with their croakings drown the voice of God.'

"He ceased, became delirious. So he died,
And I still unrepentant buried him
There in Montreaux, and with what gold remained
Went on to Paris.

"See how I was marked
For God's salvation.

"There I went to see
The celebrated teacher Jean Strakosch,
Who looked at me with insolent, calm eyes,
And face impassive, let me sing a scale,
Then shook his head. A diva, as I thought,
Came in just then. They talked in French, and I,
Prickling from head to foot with shame, ignored,
Left standing like a fool, passed from the room.
So music turned on me, but God received me,

And I came back to Springfield. But the Lord
Made life too hard for me without the fold.
I was so shunned and scorned, I had no place
Save with the fallen, with the mockers, drinkers.
Thus being in conviction, after struggles,
And many prayers I found salvation, found
My work in life: which is to talk to girls
And stand upon this platform and relate
My story for their good."

She ceased. Amens
Went up about the room. The big drum boomed,
And the raucous brass horns mingled with the cymbals,
The silver triangle and the singing voices.

My friend and I arose and left the room.

NEANDERTHAL

"Then what is life?" I cried. And with that cry
I woke from deeper slumber—was it sleep?—
And saw a hooded figure standing by
The bed whereon I lay.

"Why do you keep,
O spirit beautiful and swift, this guard
About my slumber? Shelley, from the deep
Why do you come with veiled face, mighty bard,
As that unearthly shape was veiled to you
At Casa Magni?"

Then the room was starred
With light as I was speaking, and I knew
The god, my brother, from whose face the veil
Melted as mist.

"What mission fair and true,
While I am sleeping, brings you? For I pale
Amid this solemn stillness, for your face
Unutterably majestic."

As when the dale
At midnight echoes for a little space,
The night-bird's cry, the god responded "Come,"

And nothing more. I left my bed apace,
And followed him with wings above the gloom
Of clouds like chariots driven on to war,
Between whose wheels the swift moon raced and swum.

A mile beneath us lay the earth, afar
Were mountains which as swift as thought drew near
As we passed over pines, where many a star
And heaven's light made every frond as clear
As through a glass or in the lightning's flash . . .
Yet I seemed flying from an olden fear,
A bulk of black that sought to sting or gnash
My breast or side—which was myself, it seemed,
The flesh or thinking part of me grown rash
And violent, a brain soul unredeemed,
Which sometime earlier in the grip of Death
Forgot its terror when my soul which streamed
Like ribbons of silk fire, with quiet breath
Said to the body, as it were a thing
Separate and indifferent: "How uneath
That fellow turns, while I am safe yet cling
Close to him, both another and the same."
Now was this mood reversed: That self must wing
Its fastest flight to fly him, lest he maim
With fleshly hands my better, stronger part,
As dragon wings my flap and quench a flame. . . .
But as we passed o'er empires and athwart

A bellowing strait, beholding bergs and floes
And running tides which made the sinking heart
Rise up again for breath, I felt how close
The god, my brother, was, who would sustain
My wings whatever dangers might oppose,
And knowing him beside me, like a strain
Of music were his thoughts, though nothing yet
Was spoken by him.

When as out of rain
Suddenly lights may break, the earth was set
Beneath us, and we stood and paused to see
The Düssel river from a parapet
Of earth and rock. Then bending curiously,
As reaching, in a moment with his hand
He scraped the turf and stones, pried up a key
Of harder granite, and at his command,
When he had made an opening, I slid
And sank, down, down through the Devonian land
Until with him I reached a cavern hid
From every eye but ours, and where no light
But from our faces was, a pyramid
Of hills that walled this crypt of soundless night.
Then in a mood, it seemed more fanciful,
He bent again and raked, and to my sight
Upheaved and held the remnant of a skull—
Gorilla's or a man's, I could not guess.
Yet brutal though it was, it was a hull

Too fine and large to house the nakedness
Of a beast's mind.

But as I looked the god
Began these words: "Before the iron stress
Of the north pole's dominion fell, he trod
The wastes of Europe, ere the Nile was made
A granary for the east, or ere the clod
In Babylon or India baked was laid
For hovels, this man lived. Ten thousand years
Before the earliest pyramid cast its shade
Upon the desolate sands this thing of fears,
Lusts, hungers, lived and hunted, woke and slept,
Mated, produced its kind, with hairy ears,
And tiger eyes sensed all that you accept
In terms of thought or vision as the proof
Of immanent Power or Love. But this skull kept
The intangible meaning out. This heavy roof
Of brutish bone above the eyes was dead
Even to lower ethers, no behoof
Of seasons, stars or skies took, though they bred
Suspicions, fears, or nervous glances, thought,
Which silent as a lizard's shadow fled
Before it graved itself, passed over, wrought
No vision, only pain, which he deemed pangs
Of hunger or of thirst."

As you have sought
The meaning of life's riddle, since it hangs

In waking or in slumber just above
The highest reach of prophecy, and fangs
With poison of despair all moods but love,
Behold its secret lettered on this brow
Placed by your own!

This is the word thereof:
Change and progression from the glazéd slough,
Where life creeps and is blind, ascending up
The jungled slopes for prey till spirits bow
On Calvaries with crosses, take the cup
Of martyrdom for truth's sake.

It may be
Men of to-day make monstrous war, sleep, sup,
Traffic, build shrines, as earliest history
Records the earliest day, and that the race
Is what it was in virtue, charity,
And nothing better. But within this face
No light shone from that realm where Hindostan,
Delving in numbers, watching stars took grace
And inspiration to explore the plan
Of heaven and earth. And of the scheme the test
Is not five thousand years, which leave the van
Just where it was, but this change manifest
In fifty thousand years between the mind
Neanderthal's and Shelley's.

NEANDERTHAL

Man progressed
Along these years, found eyes where he was blind,
Put instinct under thought, crawled from the cave,
And faced the sun, till somewhere heaven's wind
Mixed with the light of Lights descending, gave
To mind a touch of divinity, making whole
An undeveloped growth.

As ships that brave
Great storms at sea on masts a flaming coal
From heaven catch, bear on, so man was wreathed
Somewhere with lightning and became a soul.
Into his nostrils purer fire was breathed
Than breath of life itself, and by a leap,
As lightning leaps from crag to crag, what seethed
In man from the beginning broke the sleep
That lay on consciousness of self, with eyes
Awakened saw himself, out of the deep
And wonder of the self caught the surmise
Of Power beyond this world, and felt it through
The flow of living.

And so man shall rise
From this illumination, from this clue
To perfect knowledge that this Power exists,
And what man is to this Power, even as you
Have left Neanderthal lost in the mists
And ignorance of centuries untold.

What would you say if learned geologists
Out of the rocks and caverns should unfold
The skulls of greater races, records, books
To shame us for our day, could we behold
Therein our retrogression? Wonder looks
In vain for these, discovers everywhere
Proof of the root which darkly bends and crooks
Far down and far away; a stalk more fair
Upspringing finds its proof, buds on the stalk
The eye may see, at last the flowering flare
Of man to-day!

I see the things which balk,
Retard, divert, draw into sluices small,
But who beholds the stream turned back to mock,
Not just itself, but make equivocal
A Universal Reason, Vision? No.
You find no proof of this, but prodigal
Proof of ascending Life!

So life shall flow
Here on this globe until the final fruit
And harvest. As it were until the glow
Of the great blossom has the attribute
In essence, color of eternal things,
And shows no rim between its hues which suit
The infinite sky's. Then if the dead earth swings
A gleaned and stricken field amid the void

What matters it to you, a soul with wings,
Whether it be replanted or destroyed?
Has it not served you?"

Now his voice was still,
Which in such discourse had been thus employed.
And in that lonely cavern dark and chill
I heard again, "Then what is life?" And woke
To find the moonlight on the window sill
That which had seemed his presence. And a cloak,
Whose hood was perked upon the moonbeams, made
The skull of the Neanderthal. The smoke
Blown from the fireplace formed the cavern's shade.
And roaring winds blew down as they had tuned
The voice which left me calm and unafraid.

* * * * *

THE END OF THE SEARCH

There's the dragon banner, says Old King Cole,
And the tiger banner, he cries.
Pantagruel breaks into a laugh
As the monarch dries his eyes.—The Search

" The tiger banyer, that is what you call much
Bad men in China, Amelica. The dragon banyer,
That is storm, leprosy, no rice, what you call
Nature. See! Nature! "—King Joy

* * * * *

Said Old King Cole I know the banner
Of dragon and tiger too,
But I would know the vagrant fellows
Who came to my castle with you.

* * * * *

And I would know why they rise in the morning
And never take bread or scrip;
And why they hasten over the mountain
In a sorrowed fellowship.

* * * * *

Then said Pantagruel: Heard you not?
One said he goes to Spain.

One said he goes to Elsinore,
And one to the Trojan plain.

* * * * *

Faith, if it be, said Old King Cole,
There is a word that's more:
Who is it goes to Spain and Troy?
And who to Elsinore?

* * * * *

One may be Quixote, said Pantagruel,
Out for the final joust.
One may be Hamlet, said Pantagruel
And one I think is Faust.

* * * * *

Whoever they be, said Pantagruel,
Why stand at the window and drool?
Let's out and catch the runaways
While the morning hour is cool.

* * * * *

Pantagruel runs to the castle court,
And King Cole follows soon.
The cobblestones of the court yard ring
To the beat of their flying shoon.

* * * * *

Pantagruel clutches the holy bottle,
And King Cole clutches his crown.

They throw the bolt of the castle gate
And race them through the town.

* * * * *

They cross the river and follow the road,
They run by the willow trees,
And the tiger banner and dragon banner
Wait for the morning breeze.

* * * * *

They clamber the wall and part the brambles,
And tear through thicket and thorn.
And a wild dove in an olive tree
Does mourn and mourn and mourn.

* * * * *

A green snake starts in the tangled grass,
And springs his length at their feet.
And a condor circles the purple sky
Looking for carrion meat.

* * * * *

And mad black flies are over their heads,
And a wolf looks out of his hole.
Great drops of sweat break out and run
From the brow of Old King Cole.

* * * * *

Said Old King Cole: A drink, my friend,
From the holy bottle, I pray.

My breath is short, my feet run blood,
My throat is baked as clay.

* * * * *

Anon they reach a mountain top,
And a mile below in the plain
Are the glitter of guns and a million men
Led by an idiot brain.

* * * * *

They come to a field of slush and flaw
Red with a blood red dye.
And a million faces fungus pale
Stare horribly at the sky.

* * * * *

They come to a cross where a rotting thing
Is slipping down from the nails.
And a raven perched on the eyeless skull
Opens his beak and rails:

* * * * *

"If thou be the Son of man come down,
Save us and thyself save."
Pantagruel flings a rock at the raven:
"How now blaspheming knave!"

* * * * *

"Come down and of my bottle drink,
And cease this scurvy rune."

But the raven flapped its wings and laughed
Loud as the water loon.

* * * * *

Said Old King Cole: A drink, my friend,
I faint, a drink in haste.
But when he drinks he pales and mutters:
"The wine has lost its taste."

* * * * *

"You have gone mad," said Pantagruel,
"In faith 'tis the same old wine."
Pantagruel drinks at the holy bottle
But the flavor is like sea brine.

* * * * *

And there on a rock is a cypress tree,
And a form with a muffled face.
"I know you, Death," said Pantagruel,
"But I ask of you no grace."

* * * * *

"Empty my bottle, sour my wine,
Bend me, you shall not break."
"Oh well," said Death, "one woe at a time
Before I come and take."

* * * * *

"You have lost everything in life but the bottle,
Youth and woman and friend.

Pass on and laugh for a little space yet
The laugh that has an end."

* * * * *

Pantagruel passes and looks around him
Brave and merry of soul.
But there on the ground lies a dead body,
The body of Old King Cole.

* * * * *

And a Voice said: Take the body up
And carry the body for me
Until you come to a silent water,
By the sands of a silent sea.

* * * * *

Pantagruel takes the body up
And the dead fat bends him down.
He climbs the mountains, runs the valleys
With body, bottle and crown.

* * * * *

And the wastes are strewn with skulls,
And the desert is hot and cursed.
And a phantom shape of the holy bottle
Mocks his burning thirst.

* * * * *

Pantagruel wanders seven days,
And seven nights wanders he.

And on the seventh night he rests him
By the sands of the silent sea.

* * * * *

And sees a new made fire on the shore,
And on the fire is a dish.
And by the fire two travelers sleep,
And two are broiling fish.

* * * * *

Don Quixote and Hamlet are sleeping,
And Faust is stirring the fire.
But the fourth is a stranger with a face
Starred with a great desire.

* * * * *

Pantagruel hungers, Pantagruel thirsts,
Pantagruel falls to his knees.
He flings down the body of Old King Cole
As a man throws off disease.

* * * * *

And rolls his burden away and cries:
"Take and watch, if you will.
But as for me I go to France
My bottle to refill.

* * * * *

"And as for me I go to France
To fill this bottle up."
He felt at his side for the holy bottle,
And found it turned a cup.

* * * * *

And the stranger said: Behold our friend
Has brought my cup to me.
That is the cup whereof I drank
In the garden Gethsemane.

* * * * *

Pantagruel hands the cup to Jesus
Who dips it in sea brine.
This is the water, says Jesus of Nazareth,
Whereof I make your wine.

* * * * *

And Faust takes the cup from Jesus of Nazareth,
And his lips wear a purple stain.
And Faust hands the cup to Pantagruel
With the dregs for him to drain.

* * * * *

Pantagruel drinks and falls into slumber,
And Jesus strokes his hair.
And Faust sings a song of Euphorion
To hide his heart's despair.

* * * * *

And Faust takes the hand of Jesus of Nazareth,
And they walk by the purple deep.
Says Jesus of Nazareth: "Some are watchers,
And some grow tired and sleep."

* * * * *

BOTANICAL GARDENS

He follows me no more, I said, nor stands
Beside me. And I wake these later days
In an April mood, a wonder light and free.
The vision is gone, but gone the constant pain
Of constant thought. I see dawn from my hill,
And watch the lights which fingers from the waters
Twine from the sun or moon. Or look across
The waste of bays and marshes to the woods,
Under the prism colors of the air,
Held in a vacuum silence, where the clouds,
Like cyclop hoods are tossed against the sky
In terrible glory.

And earth charmed I lie
Before the staring sphinx whose musing face
Is this Egyptian heaven, and whose eyes
Are separate clouds of gold, whose pedestal
Is earth, whose silken sheathéd claws
No longer toy with me, even while I stroke them:
Since I have ceased to tease her.

Then behold
A breeze is blown out of a world becalmed,
And as I see the multitudinous leaves

Fluttered against the water and the light,
And see this light unveil itself, reveal
An inner light, a Presence, Secret splendor,
I clap hands over eyes, for the earth reels;
And I have fears of dieties shown or spun
From nothingness. But when I look again
The earth has stayed itself, I see the lake,
The leaves, the light of the sun, the cyclop hoods
Of thunder heads, yet feel upon my arm
A hand I know, and hear a voice I know—
He has returned and brought with him the thought
And the old pain.

The voice says: "Leave the sphinx.
The garden waits your study fully grown."

And I arise and follow down a slope
To a lawn by the lake and an ancient seat of stone,
And near it a fountain's shattered rim enclosing
An Eros of light mood, whose sculptured smile
Consciously dimples for the unveiled pistil of love,
As he strokes with baby hand the slender arching
Neck of a swan. And here is a peristyle
Whose carven columns are pink as the long updrawn
Stalks of tulips bedded in April snow.
And sunk amid tiger lillies is the face
Of an Asian Aphrodite close to the seat
With feet of a Babylonian lion amid

BOTANICAL GARDENS

This ruined garden of yellow daisies, poppies
And ruddy asphodel from Crete, it seems,
Though here is our western moon as white and thin
As an abalone shell hung under the boughs
Of an oak, that is mocked by the vastness of sky between
His boughs and the moon in this sky of afternoon. . . .
We walk to the water's edge and here he shows me
Green scum, or stalks, or sedges, grasses, shrubs,
That yield to trees beyond the levels, where
The beech and oak have triumph; for along
This gradual growth from algæ, reeds and grasses,
That builds the soil against the water's hands,
All things are fierce for place and garner life
From weaker things.

And then he shows me root stocks,
And Alpine willow, growths that sneak and crawl
Beneath the soil. Or as we leave the lake
And walk the forest I behold lianas,
Smilax or woodbine climbing round the trunks
Of giant trees that live and out of earth,
And out of air make strength and food and ask
No other help. And in this place I see
Spiral bryony, python of the vines
That coils and crushes; and that banyan tree
Whose spreading branches drop new roots to earth,
And lives afar from where the parent trunk

Has sunk its roots, so that the healthful sun
Is darkened: as a people might be darkened
By ignorance or want or tyranny,
Or dogma of a jungle hidden faith.
Why is it, think I, though I dare not speak,
That this should be to forests or to men;
That water fails, and light decreases, heat
Of God's air lessens, and the soil goes spent,
Till plants change leaves and stalks and seeds as well,
Or migrate from the olden places, go
In search of life, or if they cannot move
Die in the ruthless marches.

That is life, he said.
For even these, the giants scatter life
Into the maws of death. That towering tree
That for these hundred years has leafed itself,
And through its leaves out of the magic air
Drawn nutriment for annual girths, took root
Out of an acorn which good chance preserved,
While all its brother acorns cast to earth,
To make trees, by a parent tree now gone,
Were crushed, devoured, or strangled as they sprouted
Amid thick jealous growth wherein they fell.
All acorns but this one were lost.

Then he reads
My questioning thought and shows me yuccas, cactus
Whose thick leaves in the rainless places thrive.

And shows me leaves that must have rain, and roots
That must have water where the river flows.
And how the spirit of life, though turned or driven
This way or that beyond a course begun,
Cannot be stayed or quenched, but moves, conforms
To soil and sun, makes roots, or thickens leaves,
Or thins or re-adjusts them on the stem
To fashion forth itself, produce its kind.
Nor dies not, rests not, nor surrenders not,
Is only changed or buried, re-appears
As other forms of life.

We had walked through
A forest of sequoias, beeches, pines,
And ancient oaks where I could see the trace
Of willows, alders, ruined or devoured
By the great Titans.

At last
We reached my hill and sat and overlooked
The garden at our feet, even to the place
Of tiger lilies and of asphodel,
By now beneath the self-same moon, grown denser:
As where the wounded surface of the shell
Thickens its shimmering stuff in spiral coigns
Of the shell, so was the moon above the seat
Beside the Eros and the Aphrodite
Sunk amid yellow daisies and deep grass.

And here we sat and looked. And here my vision
Was over all we saw, but not a part
Of what we saw, for all we saw stood forth
As foreign to myself as something touched
To learn the thing it is.

I might have asked
Who owns this garden, for the thought arose
With my surprise, who owns this garden, who
Planted this garden, why and to what end,
And why this fight for place, for soil and sun
Water and air, and why this enmity
Between the things here planted, and between
Flying or crawling life and plants, and whence
The power that falls in one place but arises
Some other place; and why the unceasing growth
Of all these forms that only come to seed,
Then disappear to enrich the insatiate soil
Where the new seed falls? But silence kept me there
For wonder of the beauty which I saw,
Even while the faculty of external vision
Kept clear the garden separate from me,
Envisioned, seen as grasses, sedges, alders,
As forestry, as fields of wheat and corn,
As the vast theatre of unceasing life,
Moving to life and blind to all but life;
As places used, tried out, as if the gardener,
For his delight or use, or for an end

Of good or beauty made experiments
With seed or soils or crossings of the seed.
Even as peoples, epochs, did the garden
Lie to my vision, or as races crowding,
Absorbing, dispossessing, killing races,
Not only for a place to grow, but under
A stimulus of doctrine: as Mahomet,
Or Jesus, like a vital change of air,
Or artifice of culture, made the garden,
Which mortals call the world, grow in a way,
And overgrow the world as neither dreamed.
Who is the Gardener then? Or is there one
Beside the life within the plant, within
The python climbers, wandering sedges, root stalks,
Thorn bushes, night-shade, deadly saprophytes,
Goths, Vandals, Tartars, striving for more life,
And praying to the urge within as God,
The Gardener who lays out the garden, sprays
For insects which devour, keeps rich the soil
For those who pray and know the Gardener
As One who is without and over-sees? . . .

But while in contemplation of the garden,
Whether from failing day or from departure
Of my own vision in the things it saw,
Bereft of penetrating thought I sank,
Became a part of what I saw and lost
The great solution.

As we sat in silence,
And coming night, what seemed the sinking moon,
Amid the yellow sedges by the lake
Began to twinkle, as a fire were blown—
And it was fire, the garden was afire,
As it were all the world had flamed with war.
And a wind came out of the bright heaven
And blew the flames, first through the ruined garden,
Then through the wood, the fields of wheat, at last
Nothing was left but waste and wreaths of smoke
Twisting toward the stars. And there he sat
Nor uttered aught, save when I sighed he said
"If it be comforting I promise you
Another spring shall come."

"And after that?"
"Another spring—that's all I know myself,
There shall be springs and springs!"

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